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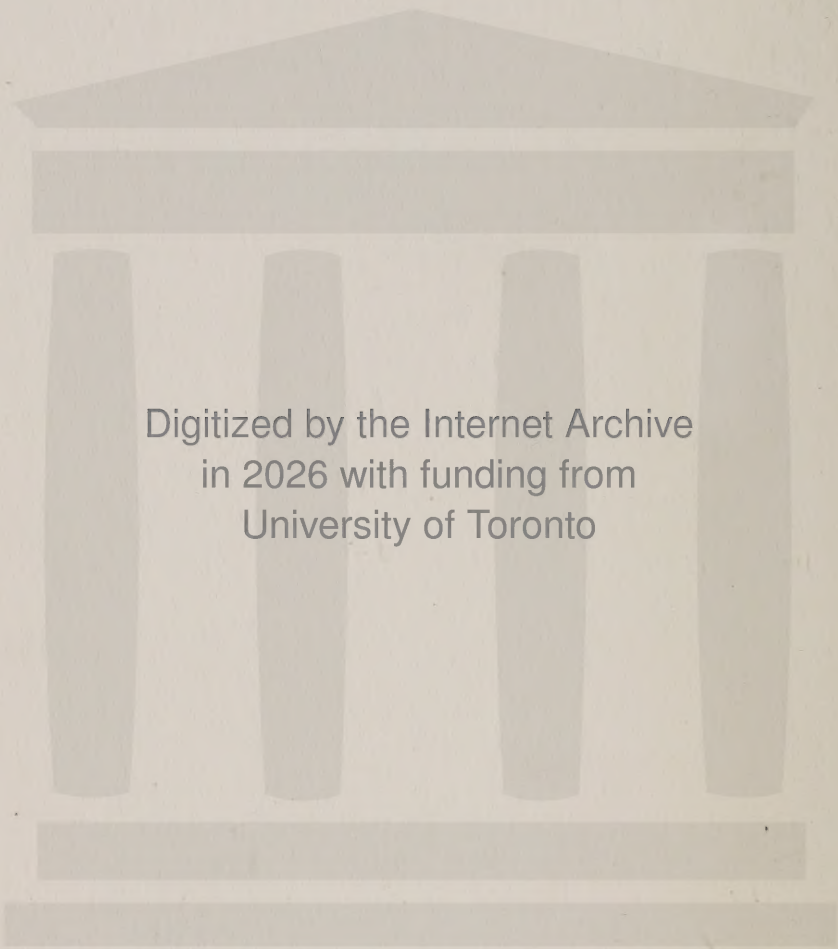
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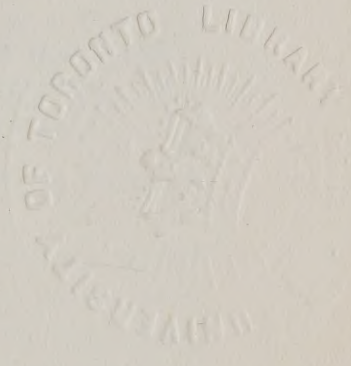
A SHEAF OF PAPERS

By Oliver Elton, D.Litt. LL.D.
King Alfred Professor of English Literature



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Note

FIVE of the articles in this miscellany have been reprinted (after revision) by the courtesy of the British Academy, the English Association, the Education Guild, and the editors of the *French Quarterly*; and two of the translations (*The Hawk* and *Forget me, madman*) in the paper on Fet (which otherwise is new) appear with the leave, which is also acknowledged with thanks, of the editor of the *Slavonic Review*. For aid in this article, and in that on Koltsov, I am indebted to Professor Sir Bernard Pares, K.B.E., and to my colleagues Professor Bruce Boswell and Mr B. Slepchenko. I have also to thank Miss H. Waddell, Mr Herbert Trench, and their publishers, Messrs A. Constable & Co., for kindly granting leave to quote the two poems on p. 11.

Poetry and Life, first given as a lecture at the University of Madras in 1918, has turned itself into a dialogue. *Hamlet the Elizabethan* and *Koltsov* remain popular addresses, and were delivered recently. Indeed, few of the contents of the sheaf profess to offer what is called original research, in the academic sense; except *English Prose Numbers*, which is of a technical character.

Liverpool, November, 1922. O. E.

To D · S · MacColl

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ERRATUM

p. 25, l. 16, *for* He jests *read* His jests.

Poetry and Life: A Dialogue

The scene was the Common Room of the College of St Thomas (the sceptic, not the schoolman). The season was a midsummer evening. The party had dined in the presence of, though not entirely upon, a brilliant sunset, whose latter rays caught the ancient silver on the table and the soft edges of elm-trees in the garden. The Junior Fellow before retreating had produced another allowance of the famous 1851; *the abstemious Dean had gone to his Sanskrit, and the veteran Master, early as it was, to his secular slumbers, secular in every sense. There lingered three members of the society, specially bound together in a pleasant and pedantic intimacy, who had fallen into the trick of addressing one another, after office hours, by classic names. By these alone we shall know them.* Aristippus *was named after the founder of the Cyrenaics; that misunderstood sect, for whom the chief or only good was said to consist in momentary pleasure. This modern* Aristippus *was accused of being the last surviving disciple of Walter Pater. The second friend,* Panaetius, *took his nickname from the most liberal of the Roman Stoics: he was strongly tinged with Platonism, and was the idealist of the group. The third,* Palinurus, *liked to pilot all discussions between extremes. He was for ever affecting to find a common ground for the others, and to reconcile their notions from a higher point of view. Perhaps he would have been sorry to succeed; but he never had any such occasion to be sorry. All three men would soon be old; but this topic they neither courted nor avoided; nor did they, as such companions are prone to do, fall to comparing the signs of infirmity in their seniors. On the contrary, as usual, they began to speak first of port, and then of poetry.*

Aristippus. No, not another glass for me. It would spoil the minute. I have had just my stint. If I took more, my pleasure would be less distinct, and I should not think so well.

Panaetius (*stroking a gray rectilineal beard*). You would think better still, if you had had only one glass, like me.

Aristippus. After all, I do not drink in order to think, any

more than I drink in order not to think. Nor yet do I drink, for all that you may think, simply that the cups and the syllables may clink . . .

PANAETIUS. I beg your pardon, but I think Barleyman is in the passage. Barleyman may be called the butler, but he is the real censor of this College, and he had best not hear . . .

ARISTIPPUS. I was only on the brink of saying that the satisfaction of liquor is an end in itself, like that of poetry.

PANAETIUS. An end of a different kind, and of a different value.

ARISTIPPUS. All pleasures are of different kinds. But they are not of different values, because there is no measure of value between them; there is only a measure of quantity, and that quantity is whatever I may declare it to be. All pleasures, in themselves, are ends, absolute ends, and different ends. The pleasure given by a good poem is incommensurable, and self-contained, and complete, and final, and sufficient.

PANAETIUS. Just as a flower cannot be measured against a sunset, or a diamond?

ARISTIPPUS. One flower of a species is very like another; but no good poem is really like another. If two poems seem to give the same pleasure, it means that one or both of them are bad.

PANAETIUS. But must not the species themselves differ in rank and glory? Is an epic not nobler than an epigram, and a tragedy than a masque? Hegel says—

ARISTIPPUS. Hegel says nothing to me. One sentence of his has indeed given me an unique pleasure, if Heine tells the truth in reporting it; that 'the stars are a brilliant leprosy on the face of the heavens.' But I distrust Hegel. I know that he makes out poetry to be the highest of the arts, and drama to be the highest sort of poetry, and tragedy to be the highest sort of drama, and Sophoclean tragedy to be the highest sort of tragedy—*ergo!* But it is all verbiage. There is no such hierarchy. All I know of a work of art is the enjoyment that it gives me; the exact and delightful impress which its perfection of form leaves upon my sensibility. I re-create for myself

a faint but real image of the pleasure which the artist felt in the act of creating. Here, for Aristippus, is the whole event!

PALINURUS (*speaking for the first time, and as though absently*). A truly catholic temper, Aristippus, and one that must make your soul hospitable to whatsoever things are good. However much you may dislike the ideas or beliefs of the artist, you will never be repelled, if his handiwork be good; because you do not care about ideas, or about their truth or falsehood, at all. Your god is expression. Am I right?

ARISTIPPUS. You are half-right, Palinurus, and I misdoubt your compliments. What delights me in the poem is that which makes it good and therefore makes it live: the form. But do I therefore care little for the truth, or idea, that is involved? Not so. Without form truth perishes. I care for truth in the only shape in which it durably exists. I follow the star of form, and I seek for the pleasure of truth through the pleasure of form, which gives a body to the soul of truth. That soul is otherwise but a wandering vapour, a pre-natal phantom without identity. No thought, no feeling, truly exists until it is expressed. No experience is known until it is expressed. The artist is he who expresses it so that others can hereafter always understand it. And all expression gives pleasure in proportion to its perfection; and this pleasure becomes itself part of the experience expressed. The poet is he who gives this pleasure in its permanent form; and it is this I seek. But, my friends, you make me talk too long; and perhaps, after all—

(*Here* ARISTIPPUS, *with his round*, abbé-*like, placid countenance shining, glanced at the decanter. But* PANAETIUS, *who had been holding himself in, broke out:*)

By the daemon of Socrates, Aristippus, that daemon who seems never to have whispered you a warning, I beseech you think it possible you may deceive yourself. You are better than you know. (*Here* ARISTIPPUS *grasped the decanter.*) You fancy that you seek for pleasure. (*Here* ARISTIPPUS *filled.*) You are wrong. (*Here* ARISTIPPUS *drank.*) Even as you drink,

you refute yourself. (ARISTIPPUS *in wonder kept his descending glass in mid-air.*) You think you are after pleasure; but what you are really after is *port.* You are seeking the thing, not the sensation; although, doubtless, you would not seek the thing but for the sensation. Bishop Butler proved this long ago concerning the pleasures of benevolence; the well-doer seeks the object,—the act of doing good, not its inseparable consequence. He does not act from self-love, though pleasure comes from his act. This is true of all things desired. And in poetry you seek for poetry, not for the pleasure of poetry, though this also comes. There would be no pleasure if you only sought for pleasure, for that very pleasure is attached to *something*, which is your real object.

ARISTIPPUS. Pray, what something? There is no something in poetry apart from the expression, and no expression apart from the pleasure given. Take now fourteen words of Milton,

> Long is the way
> And hard, that out of Hell leads up to light.

Where is the *thing*, or the idea, apart from the expression? Or do you say that form and idea are blended into some nameless third, some *x*, which is the true source of my enjoyment? I care not, so you leave me my enjoyment.

PANAETIUS. Perhaps we had better leave that old blind alley, the metaphysical relation of form and content in art. I suspect the dispute is really one of temperaments, not of principles. But I will say this, that your notion of form cannot be a true one. You think of form, and of expression, as something positive, something that can be enjoyed and rolled over on *the mind's tongue, Horatio;* for so I will pervert the words of Hamlet. But no; form at its best is something negative; it is a pure transparency; it means that there is nothing there which ought not to be there, or which gets between the mind of the artist and the mind of the hearer. Your fourteen words are all common wayside words, and there is nothing special about them except a couple of simple inversions of order.

Yet they give the perennial truth of the idea, which no one need ever try to express again. All merely splendid or decorative effects are nothing to this. No, my friend, look into your own breast, and you will find that what you prize in poetry is its eternal verity; and form is the absence of anything that can distract you from that verity. And this is why one kind of poem must be *better* than another; because its rank and value must depend on the rank and value of the verity expressed. I am assuming the expression perfect, for that is our common ground. No art can get more out of an idea than is contained in it; it can only get out all that is therein. Hence *L'Allegro* is of a lower rank than *Paradise Lost;* there is not so much in it; and this consequence there is no evading. Why, the common unacademic man, who likes poetry because it makes him 'feel better,' sees this truth. So it does, and such is its business. And I advise a burnt almond to remove the taste of my last remark, which is this, that poetry exists in order to *educate* Aristippus.

PALINURUS. Do not jump, Aristippus, it is only our friend's way, and he is in good company. Of Plato, I mean, and the whole idealist tribe. They are always with us. Tolstoy attacked all art, unless he could find an evangelical aim in it, and that aim he reduced to an insanity. Shelley was saner; he was a Platonist at one remove. We know how he said that 'the great instrument of moral good is the imagination, and poetry administers to the effect by acting on the cause.' You must really reckon with this, O my Aristippus. What would Shelley say to the kind of pleasure that you profess to get out of *his* poetry?

ARISTIPPUS. Shelley's ghost cannot prevent me from enjoying him as I do enjoy him. His ideals are moonshine; his Utopia is inhuman; his disbeliefs are infantine, and can only bring discredit on a truly ripe scepticism. But what is that to me? If *you*, Panaetius, disbelieved his report, what would be left for you to like? For me the quintessence abides. 'The mastery of insuperable song'—what has that to do with

'administering' anything? Or with education? Education! Pass the port.

(*Here the talk paused. The daylight was nearly out, and there was no moon. The candles were lit; but the hoary, ruddy* BARLEYMAN, *knowing the tastes of the gentlemen, had not drawn the blinds. They looked out into the scented darkness, and could see little except the image, in the windowpanes, of the lights as they played on the glass and burnished oak in that ghostly mirrored world. The prospect was barred by a branch of the historic wistaria, whose purple flowers looked black on the low sill. It was so quiet, that the sound of a distant lasher reached them.*)

ARISTIPPUS. I am moved to start afresh. My friends, if we were poets, and could give body and form to the impression of this moment, you would see that you agreed with me. Or suppose that Whistler had painted it; no one would ask more from his work than the pleasure of perfect expression; no one would talk about education, or noble moral ideas, or what is vulgarly called 'uplift.' What more, then, is there in the matter? Well, then, suppose Matthew Arnold—the poet and observer, I mean, not the propagandist—had rhymed the scene; where is the difference? Education, forsooth!

(*The others seemed to have fallen into a muse. At last* PALINURUS *looked up, and said, rather sharply:* I deny the dilemma. *Whereat his friends replied with one voice, as though repeating a formula, or making a familiar opening at draughts:* Palinurus, beware the fate of Palinurus! *Both these sentences had become a kind of catchword in their debates.* PALINURUS *was well known for his middle courses; and the others threatened him with the fate of the pilot of Aeneas.*)

PALINURUS. But I do not mean to founder; and you will hear no compromise from me. I drop, as Panaetius asks, the whole dispute as between form and substance. Neither of them exists alone; certainly not the substance. The satirist speaks of the man who

> took First Matter, all alone,
> Before one rag of Form was on,

but I shall not, any more than Aristippus, attempt such an impropriety. And if Aristippus believes in pure form — which I know he does not—I make him a present of it. It is but the empty pre-existent state which another poet describes —the unborn life

Crying with frog-voice, 'What shall I be?'

Away with these questions. And yet I do believe that one sort of poetry is *better* than another. And my criterion of value lies outside both form and content. And yet it is still determined by considerations of pleasure and pain.

ARISTIPPUS. Pain? Where does pain come in?

PANAETIUS. Where, rather, does pleasure come in, if—

PALINURUS. Let me explain. Different kinds, and ranks, of poetry, I distinguish by their several relationships to *life*, and to the pleasure and pain that is involved in life. There are, therefore, two orders of pleasure and pain involved in the question; two orders, distinct but curiously connected. There are the pleasure and pain, sometimes pure, sometimes intermixed, that are inherent for the poet in the experience represented by him. And there are the pleasure and pain, also sometimes pure and sometimes intermixed, which are given to the hearer of the poem (for the moment I leave out the poet himself) by the poet's representation. Now these two orders sometimes coincide, and this is the simplest case, to be taken first; namely, where all is pleasure; but sometimes, what is more intricate, they by no means coincide; namely, where pain intrudes. These two orders, or rather spheres, of pleasure and pain correspond to two distinct orders of poetry, which are not commonly discriminated. It is my object to prove that one of these orders, namely, the second, where the correspondence between the pleasure and pain of the experience portrayed, and the pleasure and pain of the hearer, is more complicated, and is in fact imperfect, is superior to the first order, where there is no such perplexity, and where there is no question of pain anywhere.

(*At all this both* ARISTIPPUS *and* PANAETIUS *looked bewildered*,

dissatisfied, and suspicious. The word life *appeared to comfort* Panaetius, *but there was still too much about* pleasure *for his liking. The word* pain *caused* Aristippus *to keep up his guard, though the blessed word* pleasure *forced him to suspend his judgment. The next few sentences made him brighten a little.*)

Palinurus. Aristippus was wholly in the right about his *nocturne.* His only error was that he talked too much about *his* pleasure, and not at all about the pleasure inherent in the *thing*, as experienced, apart from the dealings of the artist with it. The poem about this present scene, the poem which will never be written, would be a poem of pure pleasure. There is no possible edification in the matter. It would belong to the kind of poetry which it is utterly absurd to treat as a means to anything beyond itself. For it has no hint of even imaginary, or repudiated, pain. You are right, Aristippus; I say it is a pure *nocturne.* It has no reason for existing except to represent and communicate sheer pleasure. You cannot separate the content, with which the form is fused, from the pleasure given by that fusion. It is nothing to me what pleasure may be in itself; it is enough that we get it, and recognize it when we get it. Panaetius' theory has no foothold at all in the presence of this sort of art. But his time may come presently.

(*The other two did not try to stop him. They knew the symptoms when* Palinurus *was once launched. So he settled himself for a longer discourse; his long, fresh countenance, under its mop of fading flaxen hair, grew keener; and pulling up his chair, and shifting his wine-glass to make room for his elbows, and building idle pagodas of walnut-shells, which ever rolled over and were for ever replaced, and setting his necktie both centrally and horizontally, for it had gone awry during his last peroration, and putting away his spectacles, and abstracting, as was his due, the very last of the decanter,* Palinurus *proceeded: falling at times into what his friends called his public manner, like a lecturer who politely credits his class with the doubts that he intends to resolve.*)

PALINURUS. Yes, in terms of life: that is my criterion. We have not far to look for the poetry of pure pleasure. The Pindaric ode in honour of an athlete is perhaps its shapeliest kind. In the ode of military victory, the poet tries in vain to suppress our memory of the price that has been paid; it trenches on the poetry of pain. But all songs of riding, or reaping, or jollity, or flying, are of this kind; and so is all the poetry of peaceful landscape, or of undisturbed nature on earth or sea; of the boats tossing or the ships unloading in the oily harbour; and so, too, is the poetry of painless love, a thing which now and then really exists; so is all poetry like *L'Allegro*, celebrating the learned pleasures which are interwoven with the scenery or in the evening shut it out. So is all writing like that of William Morris—the Morris of *Jason*—which recalls cheerful pattern or tapestry. Or, as in the land of Oberon, the pleasures of the dream are added to those of waking life; for the poet dreams with authority. Or, as in the land of Illyria, the troubles are pretence and are wiped away like those of children. Yet in the drama it is hard to get unmixed pleasure; for the drama represents men and women. Well, all this poetry can no more be moralized than a draught of spring water. It is an absolute end in itself. Panaetius may come in and say that the spring water is medicinal. But that is an incident; it is not why we drink it. Wordsworth makes the water out to be medicinal, whenever he can. But his moral is often best away, and bad for the poetry. And where that is not so, the poetry, with its suggestion of duty, of conflict, of some *worse alternative*, ceases to belong to the poetry of pure pleasure, and trenches on that of pain. This latter, remember, I have still to reach; and I shall prove it is the better kind. O Panaetius, I am not trying to get round Wordsworth. He is always there, like Helvellyn; but, like Helvellyn, he can wait.

ARISTIPPUS. I did not know, Palinurus, that you were such an *æsthete*.

PALINURUS. There never was an æsthete, O Aristippus. And if there ever was one, I am arguing against him all the while.

For I think in terms of life; and he forgets life, and only thinks in terms of himself. I enjoy the real pleasures that poetry represents, before as well as after the poet represents them. But you, Aristippus, who perhaps think yourself an æsthete, or a Cyrenaic,—well, let me take it that you are one: You never lose yourself in life, or even in pleasure. It is Aristippus and his sensations all the time. He is one of a chosen few. You think of yourself as enjoying the poet's enjoyment of the singing haymaker's enjoyment; but you never do what the poet does, you never get into the skin of the haymaker as he sings. How then can you reproduce 'a faint but real image of the pleasure felt by the creative artist'?

ARISTIPPUS. And pray, how do you know what I do or do not enjoy?

PALINURUS. My friend, I am speaking of your theories, not of your true feelings. But at all events the poetry of pure pleasure is not divorced from life; it has no sense as a thing apart from life. It saves, it puts into ideal form, those passages of life which fall to the lot of all but the very wretched; and even they have pleasures in their dreams. It is the work of civilization to give more of this unmarred happiness to more people; no fear that any one will ever have too much of it! And it is no matter how few people may care for the poetry that represents it. Let us first have the thing itself, and the poetry will come and can take its chance. Youth will always be there, expecting this kind of happiness. But youth has to learn; and the fate of youth turns much on the degree in which the teacher can clear away the obstacles carefully and damnably invented by civilization against the increase and reception of such pleasure. I do not mind talking about education, if education means this. And the poet, when he comes, fixes these impressions so long as print or human memories remain. He preserves what Burke calls the soft green of the soul. His work, therefore, is inspired by pleasure, and expresses pleasure, and communicates in one and the same act the pleasure of the experience represented and the

pleasure given by its perfect representation. Thus his work is an end in itself, and is one of the few good things that are absolutely such. We could go on for ever accumulating instances of the poetry of pleasure, if life would only let us. But then it will not.

ARISTIPPUS. I might remind you, my eloquent friend, that you have not yet given any instances at all. Let us have one before you go on. Not a hackneyed one. Not one of the known classics! Let us have the pleasure of strangeness too. Only the thing must be perfect; no eking out of imperfections by excellent motives, if you please.

PALINURUS. No, do you find one. This is your province.

ARISTIPPUS (*recites*):

Peach blossom after rain
  Is deeper red;
The willow fresher green;
  Twittering overhead;
And fallen petals lie wind-blown,
Unswept upon the courtyard stone.

That is more than a thousand years old in the original. We owe it to Miss Helen Waddell, whose *Lyrics from the Chinese*, founded on the late Dr Legge's versions, contain many beautiful adaptations. The subject is early morning. Now, Palinurus, it is your turn. A love-poem, please: and remember, it must not imply even any '*repudiated* pain.'

PALINURUS. Not so easy, nowadays. But will this do? The poet is Mr Herbert Trench:

She comes not when Noon is on the roses—
    Too bright is Day.
She comes not to the soul till it reposes
    From work and play.

But when Night is on the hills, and the great Voices
    Roll in from sea,
By starlight and by candlelight and dreamlight
    She comes to me.

Not much wrong, I think? Only I am not so sure about there being no 'repudiation.' Panaetius, will you not give a third piece? Nothing unto edification, you understand, or Aristippus will murmur.

PANAETIUS. My dear sir, he has no right to murmur if I give him all *he* wants, and something else as well that *I* want!

ARISTIPPUS. My dear sir, who told you that I should murmur?

PANAETIUS.

Coy city, that dost swathe thy summer self
In willow lines and elmy avenue,
Each Winter comes, and brings some hidden pelf,
Buttress, or Cross, or gable, out to view:
While his thin sunlight frugal lustre sheds
On the straight streams and yellow osier beds.

But thy main glory is that winter wood,
With its dead fern and holly's Christmas green,
And mosses pale, and trees that have not strewed
Their withered leaves, which yet perchance are seen
Struggling to reach the spring, as though for them
New sap would rise from out the grateful stem.

Faber, on Oxford and Bagley, as you know. Now, Aristippus, if on those pure pleasures supervene still other good things, such as health, virtue, and innocence, you may say that these have nothing directly to do with the poetry, while I say they are part of its end and aim and warrant. We need not fight over that difference. You agree? Yes. But I am anxious for Palinurus to get on to the poetry of pain, and to see how you will fit it into your world of cherished pleasures.

ARISTIPPUS. Easily enough. Let him get on. But first let him tell us what he means by the poetry of pain. Of pure pain? Is that possible, and if so how long can it continue? And is the painfulness to reside only in the topic? and must not that be counterpoised by pleasure in the handiwork, if the result is to be poetry at all? I say that it must. There must be a clear net balance of delight.

PALINURUS. The poetry of unrelieved pain exists—I mean the topic may be purely painful. But I agree that it cannot go on long—not so long as the poetry of pure pleasure; for pain exhausts itself, while pleasure renews itself. Some of Shelley's songs are a cry of pure pain; but it must be soon over. No such lyric can go on long without relief. As to the net balance, and how it is cast up, that is a longer story. Pleasure in the handiwork fuses with pleasure in the thing represented; but it appears to contradict, at first sight, the pain caused by the thing represented. It cannot mix with that pain. Nor can it strictly overpower it, or cancel it out; for that implies the cancelling out of the meaning, which is absurd. There is no real 'net balance'; our sensibilities are not a ledger. The truth is, there are species of delight which are peculiar to the poetry of pain, and which further belong to the painful part of it. This can only be understood by going back from poetry to life, to the actual experience portrayed. 'There be some sports are painful, and their labour Delight in them sets off.'

ARISTIPPUS. But where is the line drawn, and what kinds of pain are incompatible with poetry itself?

PALINURUS. No one can draw the line. The line is drawn by the event, that is by the success of the poet; and the only test of that is our agreement that he succeeds. No one knows how far the poet can go, till the poet has tried. Henley's hospital verses enlarged the capacities of our poetry for the presentment of physical and nervous pain. But as to the peculiar delights I spoke of, they are many and intricate. They are best seen in tragedy. Lear on the heath, Othello in the bedchamber, the Duchess of Malfy in the prison—these scenes certainly inflict positive pain, and must have cost the authors still more pain. Still,—and this apart from the delight given by music and language—the pain is neither continuous nor unrelieved. For there is the pleasure caused by the innocence or nobleness of the victim; or, for that matter, of the culprit, when he is Othello; and this, do what we will, causes a cross-current of delight. There is the plea-

sure of hope, before we know what will be the end. And there is the pleasure of understanding pain. This is a great point. It is, I judge, distinguishable from the pleasure given by the artist's execution, though of course it depends on that. To get the nature of the misery clear is a relief; to get it said is a greater one; if it is once really said, the misery begins to be over, or at least to change its complexion. All this is different from the satisfaction of connoisseurship. For it takes us back to life, to the represented scene as real. (I dismiss with contempt the supposed pleasure that we get from knowing that the thing is not real but only a story; this is an affront to the artist, and is only true when he is a bad artist, if even then.) Of course the varieties of representable pain are endless; though they are not so numerous as the pains of life, some of which, like the toothache, can only be made artistic by special circumstance. And in general purely physical agony is suspect; as where, in the disgusting *La Tosca*, the man is heard suffering torture in order that the woman may be made to reveal a secret. But physical agony can be glorified by the occasion, or by genius, as in the heroic verse of battle.

ARISTIPPUS. But what about the upshot, the final balance of pleasure and pain? Or, if you refuse the term balance, the *resultant* emotion?

PANAETIUS. We go away purged, or purified, or better men, or cleaner in spirit, or whatever Aristotle meant by his *katharsis*.

PALINURUS. No. I believe with Goethe, that we do not go away different at all. Goethe thought that Aristotle simply referred to a stage solution, to the need of finishing the story; and says that we find ourselves just as envious, or selfish, after the play as before. Whatever the old Greek may have meant, I believe this to be the fact. But I also believe that as the work of art finishes, there is, for the moment, a complex resultant feeling, which I scruple to state in terms of pleasure or pain; because it is founded on a

swift retrospect of the whole *progress* of the poem, with its many alternations of delight and pain. But this reflection brings in new matter, as they say in debates; and I see that Barleyman is making slight demonstrations near the clock.

(*The others, in friendly fashion, let him feel that they would be glad to hear him out, briefly, and he went on:*)

Nearly every poem except the shortest has a progress, or a kind of curve, which can be largely defined by pleasures and pains succeeding and checking one another. In Shelley's *West Wind* the progress is through a series of emotional discords, or plaintive notes, to a strain of hopefulness: the whole in very short compass. This concluding strain reflects itself back on the whole series; for the end of every poem matters more than the beginning. And in works on a bigger scale, whether epical, merely narrative, or dramatic (I speak only of tragedy), there must be somewhere a painful crisis, gradually led up to, of which the pain, while it lasts, is tempered not only by the excellence of the handiwork, but by the pleasures of hope and of suspense, and by our exalted delight in understanding a scene of impassioned and vital interest. There may be a tragic catastrophe; but it is tempered in these ways, and also by the portrayal of splendid persons; whose existence, though imaginary, is delightful whatever may befall them, because they give cause for human nature to hope. Some sort of discords are raised, and sounded to their utmost, and are then resolved in a fashion that satisfies the imagination. I sometimes fancy, that if we could suppose the absurd, and deprive the poets of the *Divine Comedy* or of *Phèdre* of their words and music, they would still remain solvent, on the strength simply of their conceptions. But this abstraction is ridiculous.

ARISTIPPUS. It is. But what about your connexion between poetry and life?

PALINURUS. I say that such poetry, in such creations, follows the law which in our sanguine moments we dream may

somehow be obeyed in the order of things. Not a mere happy ending; but an ending, a final effect, a total progress, which on retrospect gives satisfaction on the whole. We have been through an imaginative experience, which we would rather have had than not have had. The poet may go, or may carry his invented creatures, through many hells and purgatories meanwhile; but he must end somewhere to our satisfaction. And since the matter of poetry may be anything in the kingdoms of nature or of man, or in the conception or legend of God, that can delight or hold the imagination, or can intelligently trouble it;—may indeed be almost anything that with good reason leaves our mortality still endurable; why, then, my friends, if the 'progress of poesy' be, typically, such as I have said, and if such a progress can only be complete in the case of the poetry of pain, it follows that this sort of poetry, being nearer to life, and containing more life, and also containing special pleasures, is, when compared with the poetry of pure pleasure, *better* than such poetry, if we measure excellence in terms of the volume of life. It also follows that the modes of poetic expression can never be exhausted, any more than the life of which they are the only enduring record. But I have done.

PANAETIUS. I know not whether Aristippus thinks your words too obvious to approve, or too heretical to tolerate.

ARISTIPPUS. I agree with most of what Palinurus says. There is nothing in my creed to prevent me. Only I have nothing to do with *better* or *worse*. Why trouble about that, when both kinds of poetry are good, and as good as they can be?

(*After this parting shot, they went to bed. At the Universities men rarely shake hands; but they remained friends, and waited for the next evening to resume their* symposium; *with all the more relish, because they would probably come to no conclusion.*)

Hamlet the Elizabethan: A Popular Lecture[1]

IT is a somewhat obvious theme, but it is mine to-night, that Shakespeare's Danes, like his Romans, are Englishmen; and, by keeping to the letter of the play and by piecing together certain traits of Hamlet, I wish to prove the obvious, without philosophizing, and without touching on many a well-known problem. But there is the previous question whether such piecework is the result of a sound method. Croce, whose work on Shakespeare everyone has been reading, would probably say that the method is all wrong. Quite justly, Croce denounces the student who first fills his head with lore about the origins, sources, cruces, and textual problems, before he sees, either upon the stage or in his mind's eye, the play. We should begin with the complete work of art, the fully expressed 'intuition' of the artist, and strive to re-enact in ourselves this final and transformed result of his unknown mental workings. That result, Croce goes on to say, is related to the literary sources and experience of the poet, not as effect is related to cause; for from such so-called causes, or antecedents, no one could ever predict such an effect as the play of *Hamlet*. No, it is related as creation, or harmonious intuition fully expressed, is related to half-ordered chaos. This contrast of Croce's is hardly safe, for it seems to come merely to this, that we can never know all the causes or antecedents in question. But, not to labour the logical point, he is clearly right as to the true order of study. Let us enter the theatre, or read the play, in ignorance of what the scholars know about it; let it strike on the unprepared virgin brain. Once the artistic impression is clear, the lore can come afterwards. Perhaps Croce would sweep away all or most of the lore. But in teaching I welcome the lore—afterwards.

[1] Given in the University of Manchester, January 30, 1922.

With my pupils I try to begin with the play; which, as Hamlet observes, is the thing. Then come, for example, such concise and invaluable prefaces as Dr. Herford gives in his edition of Shakespeare. It is pure loss to ignore such hints as fate has spared us concerning the poet's experiments, material, and processes. There is nothing deeply philosophical in the process of sweeping away the fruits of criticism and science. They are not, however, my topic tonight. And perhaps Croce, as I said, might condemn the device of piecework. Certainly, beside setting in too strong a light the fugitive details that flash by half in shadow, piecework violates the order in which the poet means us to receive our impressions. That, however, is a drawback incident to all analysis, including Croce's own. The poet did not put in the detail for nothing. So I proceed without penitence, only accepting heartily Croce's warning not to treat Hamlet as an historical character or build figments about him which are not in the play. Brandes remarks that Hamlet is a more real person, and better known, than all the Danes of history. Brandes must settle that point with his countrymen. His own well-known critical romance shows to what lengths it is possible to go in constructive guesswork. But we need not ask what Hamlet said to Yorick, or what he was like at the university of Wittenberg. I have read discourses about what Hamlet was thinking of between the acts or before the play began.

First of all, what is the *religion* of Shakespeare's Denmark? It is intimated in a fairly definite way, though not obtrusively. Denmark is not the heathendom of Saxo's old story of Amlethus, with its northern gods. Nor is it the heathendom of *Lear*, where the gods 'kill us for their sport.' Nor is it simply the England of the last years of Elizabeth, under the Tudor ecclesiastical settlement. It is, indeed, near enough to this for the comprehension of the audience. It is a Christian land. The strolling players, says the prince, have not, as they ought to have, the accent of Christians; nor the gait of Christian,

pagan, nor man. There are nunneries; Ophelia is told to go to one. There are churches; if a great man's memory is to outlive him for more than half a year, he must build churches. There are priests; one of them unwillingly performs maimed funeral rites over Ophelia, and Laertes tells him that she will be a ministering angel while he lies howling. Thus there are angels; and the soul of the dying Hamlet is commended to flights of singing angels; and perhaps Ophelia was one of them.

Denmark, then, is a Christian land; and, moreover, it is under the old faith. The last eucharist and unction are required for the dying man. The elder Hamlet has perished without these consolations. He is in purgatory for his sins, and he must go back at cockcrow to sulphurous and tormenting flames; all the more, that he has missed the sacred rites. The guilt of the murderer is enhanced by having exposed him to this further penance. The Ghost must 'fast in fires' for a term; he could a tale unfold. There is nothing to show that Shakespeare knew how Dante had unfolded that tale. Claudius, the fratricide, is also a sufficient theologian. He knows that restitution is just as needful as repentance:

> May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?
> In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
> And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself
> Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above;
> There is no shuffling.

But Claudius cannot even repent. He has, in fact, just planned another murder, by sending Hamlet overseas; and his 'limèd soul' is the more 'engaged.' Hamlet, watching Claudius at prayer, is a theologian too, and presumably a correct one. For he will not take him in the purging of his soul, but at some other time, when he is sinning, so that he may be damned thoroughly. Sir Thomas Browne mentions only to disbelieve the story of an Italian assassin who

argued likewise.[1] Some say that this is mere self-deception in Hamlet, and an excuse for indecision. Rather is it a gust of the savage ferocity which he inherits from the old Amlethus. He really wishes that his revenge may be not only fuller, but also a revenge in kind; for Claudius had taken his father 'grossly, full of bread.' Still, this very wish implies the conception of purgatory, or of hell-fire.

Hamlet also respects the divine law against suicide, which, though not explicit in scripture, is rooted in the clerical, civil, and moral codes of the West. Recently, in *Julius Cæsar*, Shakespeare had paid the highest honours to the Roman or Stoic suicide, which gives the last ennobling touch to the life of Brutus. But in the prince of Denmark the Stoic has disappeared. In Horatio certainly, who is 'more an antique Roman than a Dane,' there is the momentary impulse to suicide; Hamlet dissuades him; not on grounds, however, of religion, but in order that Horatio may live to clear Hamlet's wounded name. Latterly, and in passing moods, Hamlet utters a belief in a providence which 'shapes our ends.' But he wavers, as we know, about the future life. In the speech 'To be or not to be' we follow, not his collected reasonings, but his doubts while he is thinking, aloud and

[1] *Religio Medici*, ii, 6: 'our bad wishes and uncharitable desires proceed no further than this life; it is the devil, and the uncharitable votes of hell, that desire our misery in the world to come.' This 'Italian' is, no doubt, also the Spaniard named in the *Brief Discourse of the Spanish State*, 1590 (Reed's note, quoted by Furness, Variorum *Hamlet*, i, 283-4): 'one of these monsters, meeting his enemy unarmed, threatened to kill him if he denied not God, . . . his mercy, suffrance, etc.; the which, when the other, desiring to live, pronounced with great horror, kneeling upon his knees: the bravo cried out, *Now will I kill thy body and soul*, and he that instant thrust him through with his rapier.'—The idea was therefore something of a *locus communis*; and Shakespeare's audience would take it to the letter; and are we to suppose (this is a large question) that, knowing this, the poet would leave it to the elect, and to posterity, to detect a more refined, and also incompatible, meaning?

alone, with the speed and inconsequence of excited thought, flying from one contradiction to another. Whether death is a sleep indeed, or only a sleep with dreams—bad dreams—or another life, he is not sure; at any rate no news comes from that bourne. Critics have noted that here Hamlet forgets the Ghost (to whom I shall return). This inconsistency, of course, cannot be one of Shakespeare's loose stitches. It represents a fluid state of conviction, highly natural in a contemporary of Bruno and Montaigne. Hamlet's doubts are sharper than those of Macbeth, who does not doubt the life to come, yet would be quite ready to 'jump' it, if only there were not 'judgment here.' But at this point Hamlet parts company with the accepted creed of his imaginary Denmark, and becomes, in a fuller sense, the Renaissance sceptic, Hamlet the Elizabethan. Before pursuing this idea it may be entertaining to note a few external features in which Hamlet is a true Elizabethan.

The inky cloak and dejected visage are warranted by the text, and have persisted on the stage. Still I always think rather of the old drawing of Henry Frederick Prince of Wales, prefixed to Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*. Henry died nine years after the play was printed, and was mourned by the poets as the pattern of the courtier, scholar, soldier. He is portrayed in a splendid dress, with a spirited proud expression, pointing a lance against someone who is not in the picture. Not that Shakespeare can have been thinking of Henry, who in 1603 was nine years old; but Henry, along with Sidney, and with Wyatt and Surrey long before, was to become an accepted type of the Courtier who is hymned by Spenser and described in the classic work of Castiglione. Hamlet is such a courtier. There is nothing new in this comparison; but it works out with curious particularity. The Courtier has not, and indeed had best not have, any salient excellence in which he is bound to surpass everyone else. He is an all-round man, ready for every call of war or peace; in battle, in the tilt, in the duello, in the foil-play, in love-making and love-

versing, in breeding, in letters, and even in philosophy. From this pattern is partly derived the modern British conception of the gentleman; who, it is to be feared, may often be described as the Courtier minus poetry, philosophy, and the arts, in spite of owning to a polite acquaintance with Horace. Hamlet, like Prince Henry, grew up at his father's court. He rode, as a child, on the back of Yorick the jester, who, let us hope, was wittier than King James's Archie Armstrong. Hamlet knows the nice passing affectations of court talk, and flouts them in the person of Osric; and there is always excellent stage business with Osric's hat. Hamlet does not, like Sir Philip Sidney, praise horsemanship; but Claudius speaks of a gentleman from France, a master-rider, who

> grew unto his seat
> And to such wondrous doing brought his horse
> As had he been incorps'd and demi-natur'd
> With the brave beast.

But Hamlet has most of the other accomplishments of the courtier. He is an ambitious fencer, Laertes a good one. The nature of the difficult exchange of rapiers in the final scene was described very plausibly in the *Times Literary Supplement* (Oct. and Nov., 1919), on the basis of Saint-Didier's French treatise of 1573; and this discovery seems to have been anticipated by Mr Egerton Castle. The process is too technical to relate here, but it would be amusing to rehearse it. The ordinary stage method of 'beat and disarm' is stated to be crude and incorrect. In any case, Hamlet, though he has not fought in war (despite Ophelia's words about the 'soldier's sword') is ready to use his weapon in earnest, both on the 'rat' behind the arras and in the finale. He further talks like a moderately good amateur musician, in the scene with the recorders. 'Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?' A very few notes on the pipe are enough for his argument. And he alludes to falconry, and imitates the hawker's

cry, when summoning Horatio after the departure of the Ghost: 'hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come!' This is an outlet for his hysterical excitement; and in some such outburst of revulsion Byron and Leigh Hunt[1] broke into wild laughter as they drove back to Pisa after burning the body of Shelley on the shore of Spezzia.

A true prince of any age, but above all of Shakespeare's age, Hamlet must have somebody or something artistic to patronize. This happens to be the poet's own art of acting; and, more especially, the art of delivery. The wandering players make for Hamlet at once; it is the Tudor court which protects them and listens to them. Hamlet is on easier terms with them than he is with the court creatures, his old fellow-students, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are almost but not quite indiscernible in their treachery and vapidity. Hamlet's directions to the players to steer between noise and tameness are, as we all agree, Shakespeare's own. But Hamlet can act himself, in real life and for dear life, as most princes must needs do. He has a natural gift that way. The chief problem for the actor of Hamlet is that he has to play the part of an actor. 'The antic disposition,' in my belief, is at almost every point feigned and not real madness, just as it was with Saxo's cunning Amlethus. And Ophelia's description of the parting is meant to imply a wealth of easy speaking movement in Hamlet. This was a chance for the boy-actor who played Ophelia but who must also, through Ophelia's gentler gestures, indicate the more emphatic ones of the prince:

> At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
> And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
> He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
> As it did seem to shatter all his bulk

[1] 'We sang, we laughed, we shouted. I even felt a gaiety the more shocking, because it was real and a relief.' (Leigh Hunt, *Autobiog.*, ed. 1850, p. 18, quoted in Byron's Letters, ed. R. E. Prothero, vi, 109 note).

And end his being: that done, he lets me go,
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their helps,
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

Hamlet has some polite literature, though probably less than Greene or Marlowe. He has not long left Wittenberg, or Cambridge. The more keenly he is moved, the more hackneyed are the classical allusions that spring to his lips. About eight times this occurs. He speaks of Jove, Mars, Mercury, Vulcan, Niobe, Hercules, and the Nemean lion; and also, more pointedly, of Nero, who had murdered his mother Agrippina, herself charged with poisoning her husband. The extent of Shakespeare's own classical information is still being debated; but it is granted that he can make a little go a long way; and so can Hamlet, who has an amused liking for a type of English classical play which by 1603 was out of fashion. He makes the Player spout a passage on Hecuba, containing some excellent rant that would be suitable to Pistol. Hamlet also arranges for the play within the play; a few lines in which are quite good enough for the school of Kyd. The Variorum edition has some pages of conjectures on the question, which are the 'dozen or sixteen lines' inserted by Hamlet for his own purposes? The answer, I think, is that we are not meant to know. The prince, further, is skilful with his pen. All in the style of the Tudor courtier is the conceited phrase of his letter to Ophelia, with its passion breaking through; and so is the insolence, not very easy for the recipient to take hold of, in his letter to Claudius. And when he sits in the cabin and forges the names of his old fellow-students in the death-message to the King of Britain, we hear of his calligraphy. He 'wrote it fair'; which apparently was not always Shakespeare's own practice, to judge by the disputes that still are heard over his script. We are not told whether Hamlet used, like Ben Jonson, the new Italian hand.

Yet Hamlet might be all this, and still not be Hamlet. So far he is a mere type or bundle of accomplishments. What of him as a man? Certain features, though they only come out after the revelation by the Ghost, are clearly native to him from the first. He has an inborn strain of refined physical disgust. He notices how thick the women paint; 'God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another.' He hates hard drinking, the national vice of Denmark (this, by the way, was historically or traditionally a true charge); and he dreads the hubbub of trumpets that nightly bray out the triumph of the King's pledge. He seems to be keen-scented —as many things suggest that Shakespeare was himself— and to have been averse to the 'mutable, rank-scented many,' as in another play they are called. He tells Horatio that he has watched for these three years how the peasant galls the kibe (the chilblain on the heel) of the courtier. He jests over the body of Polonius, and the skull of Yorick show the same olfactory daintiness,—of which the characteristic is that it dallies with, and weaves conceits around the object that inspires disgust. A fastidious bodily repulsion counts for much in his hatred of Claudius, and in his revolt against the re-marriage. And this oversharpened delicate-indelicate sensibility oppresses him from the very outset; united with the feeling, above all, of his mother's *impiety;* taking that word in its larger Roman sense of the violation of natural and moral ties. Hamlet is not represented as loving, or as having loved, his mother greatly. Gertrude's marriage is against the canon law, and may have been recognized as such by the audience. But the play says nothing explicitly about that. Hamlet is shocked by the quick, the cheap, the illegitimate transfer of what stands for passion from such a man as his father to such a man as his uncle.[1] This sensual side of the business haunts, and frequently taints, his imagination. The innuendoes in his talk with Ophelia are no mere Elizabethan plain-speaking. In the 'closet-scene,' when Hamlet rates and

[1] See note, next page.

counsels his mother, he is the victim of an obsession on the subject and unlooses his tongue in morbid and brutal rhetoric. This outburst comes all the way down from Saxo's Amlethus through Belleforest, Shakespeare's immediate creditor; it is another survival of saga-ferocity. But the poet seized upon it; and here, rooted in the very springs of natural piety, is a main source of the disgust that from the beginning has wearied Hamlet of 'all the uses of this world.'

The audience, be it said, might see Claudius from rather a different angle. He would not be an unfamiliar figure. They would have, from books and plays, a floating idea of the Machiavellian prince-villain, and Claudius would seem an adroit but mean example of the species. I am not sure that they would see the 'grim irony' that modern critics have found in the praying-scene, where Claudius, as remarked above, has just plotted the destruction of Hamlet. Such irony is more like something in Dostoyevsky. The audience would take the scene more simply, watching the double and concurrent struggle in the minds of Claudius and of Hamlet. They loved the broad violent contrasts that the poet lavishes in this tragedy, the greatest melodrama in the world. He also spends all his skill in devising a special, artificial, and diplomatic cast of language for Claudius, which is not wholly dropped when he is alone with Gertrude. And even in the praying-scene the king wonders whether he cannot argue and score a point and negotiate with God. As to Gertrude, it seems fair to say that her portrait is left unfinished.[1]

[1] It is hard to escape the reading of the Ghost's revelation taken by Dr A. C. Bradley and others, namely, that the seduction of Gertrude occurred in the lifetime of King Hamlet; and the words of Hamlet himself in the 'closet scene' (III, iv, 40 ff., 'makes marriage vows as light as dicers' oaths,' etc.), seem to strengthen this view. Still, they can be taken as merely referring to a too hasty second marriage, which makes light of the solemn vows sworn at the first. And the poet cannot mean us to bear hard on this aspect of the matter, for Hamlet nowhere else does so even in that passage;

In the revised version (the second quarto) the question of her acquaintance with the murder, even as an accessory after the fact, is left in shadow, and we are not meant to press it. We do not know why the poet cancelled the definite disavowal of knowledge which Gertrude utters in the first quarto. And why does he give her, what seem out of character, the elegiac lines which she speaks over Ophelia? We shall never know. A modern actress might have teased the playwright to let her have at least one poetical and sympathetic speech. Did the dressed-up Jacobean boy? But this is just the sort of guesswork that I began by abjuring.

Nearly all these features of Hamlet, at whatever stage in the play they may appear, seem to belong in themselves to his original character, however much they may have been intensified by the crisis in his career, namely the revelation by the Ghost. It is only after this event that the full riches of Hamlet's spirit are seen, like treasures in the earth that are laid open by some natural convulsion. It is probably idle to try and make a portrait of Hamlet; he is too like a living man to be pinned out by analysis. Much is left to the actor, and there are as many warrantable Hamlets as there are intelligent actors. We must think of Shakespeare, himself a

and in the play-scene, the very words which make the 'king rise' are 'you shall see *anon* how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife' (III, ii), that is, after the murder shall have been committed. Also Hamlet's use, in the final scene, of the word 'incestuous' to Claudius (see J. Dover Wilson, *loc. cit.* in next note, p. 141) might also be his term, in his excitement, for an unholy second match. On the other hand, as Mr Wilson remarks, the first quarto mentions the previous adultery several times, taking it probably from the *Hystorie of Hamblet* or Belleforest. (Saxo, by the way, makes the murder come first: 'Trucidati quoque fratris uxore potitus,' etc.; ed. Holder, bk. iii, p. 87). I think that the poet, when revising, decided to leave the point unemphasized after it had once been stated, and that if we wish to accompany Hamlet's thoughts we had better here follow the poet.

player, as leaving a very large margin of this kind, rather than as designing and imposing a clear-cut and final interpretation. His genius, in fact, is here to be measured by the freedom of treatment that he permits. Also we should remember the wise remark of Dowden, to the effect that the poet does not start, as he does in the case of Othello or Timon, with the object of embodying some ruling trait, or single fatal frailty, but with that 'of re-handling the subject of an old play so as to give it fresh interest on the stage, and following the instinctive leadings of his genius.' I therefore confine myself to noting, not exactly 'two points in Hamlet's soul,' but two aspects of his ideas and opinions which mark him out as an Elizabethan dreamer or thinker. These shall be, first, his temper towards the preternatural, and secondly his view of the destinies and faculties of human nature.

And first as to the preternatural. This brings us back to the Ghost. How, to begin with, would the audience feel towards the Ghost? Well, they would feel, each hearer according to his station and culture, very much as the respective personages in the play feel. The few kinsmen of Horatio sitting in the house might share for a second his transitory doubt as to whether it is not an *illusion*.[1] But to most of them the Ghost would be quite real and natural, not to say solid. There would, indeed, be only the three alternatives, and they are all reviewed by Hamlet. It may be a 'spirit of health,' a phrase which possibly means an angel in human form; but

[1] See, on this question, *Mod. Lang. Review*, October 1917, 'Hamlet's Hallucination,' by W. W. Greg; April 1918, 'The Parallel Plots in Hamlet,' a reply by J. Dover Wilson; October 1919, 'Reenter Ghost,' rejoinder by Mr Greg, whose thesis, which I think Mr Dover Wilson refutes, is nevertheless most adroitly argued and raises several fresh issues. See too *id.*, July 1918, 'Horatio and the Ghost in Hamlet,' by Percy Simpson; and, for an earlier and luminous note, *id.*, April 1906, 'Shakespeare's Ghosts,' by the late F. W. Moorman.

this is the least likely answer. Or it is a 'goblin damned,' a devil, or devil's emissary, an instrument of darkness come for some ill purpose in human disguise. Perhaps King James would take this view. But it is that of the scholar rather than the common people. They would not hesitate, any more than Partridge did in *Tom Jones*, to give the true and natural answer. Shakespeare's lovely folklore would only confirm their conviction. This is very unlike the grim and sombre folklore of Saxo and his heathen Amlethus. Marcellus, the officer, relates of the Ghost how

> It faded on the crowing of the cock.
> Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
> The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
> And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;
> The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
> No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
> So hallowed and so gracious is the time.
> *Hor.* So have I heard, and do in part believe it.

Marcellus may mean, indeed, either a non-human or a human 'spirit'; probably the latter; for Horatio thinks the Ghost is an 'extravagant and erring spirit,' that is, a human spirit escaped from some durance. Hamlet, after dismissing the other solutions, swiftly assumes that it *is* his father's spirit. And he knows that a ghost must be spoken to first. His doubt vanishes, and he fixes, like the soldiers, not so much on the fact of the apparition, which though a terrible is not at all an unnatural phenomenon, as on the portent of its being armed, instead of being clad in those 'cerements' of death, which Hamlet, we are perhaps meant to think, had himself beheld. What is the omen of the armour? 'All is not well.' I may now mention three respects in which the Ghost himself is a good Elizabethan.

We are well informed about the elder Hamlet. If Rowe's tradition be true that the poet played the part, no wonder

that he took special pains in elaborating it. For the Ghost too is a courtier; a scholar-soldier, but more of the soldier. A good soldier, and high-tempered, who had smitten the Poles in that singular affray upon the ice, and had killed his man in a duel upon which a wager of land depended. A noble and stately figure, he was of a ruddy countenance; else his son could not have asked the question, 'Pale? or red?'; with a sable silvered beard, a slow walk, a courteous action (*atto*, gesture). In aspect he might be one of Spenser's symbolic figures of bravery and courtesy. A sinner, like all of us, he is now in a state of purgation and repentance. But he is suffered to return in order that he may reveal the crime, and urge the duty of blood vengeance: a state of mind, no doubt, that suits ill with the purposes of purgatory, and also with the ideal of the Courtier. Here again we are faced with the Renaissance confusion of moral and religious codes.

The Ghost is in other ways a Renaissance ghost, a familiar figure to the playgoers; he is the avenging phantom-victim of the Senecan play. He has a most respectable pedigree, which has often been described; he had appeared in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and in the lost *Hamlet* known to Shakespeare, and he had crossed the boards in *Julius Cæsar*. He came to disclose the crime, to instruct the avenger (often a son or father), to overlook his steps and chide his delays, and to utter moral sentences in the intervals. Such was his calling; and the elder Hamlet is only the most impressive, because the most human, of his tribe. Again, he is in one scene a farcical Ghost, and is treated by Hamlet as old truepenny in the cellarage. This accords quite well with Hamlet's revulsion of temper. And besides, to the audience, the 'old mole' would not appear to be profanely treated. They believed in ghosts; and so they could laugh at him without a shock, just as pious persons can safely talk of sacred things with a certain pleasantry. It is only your literary critic, who does not accept the Ghost, that *needs* to be secured from the

risk of light relief. He is in an artificial mood, which goes to pieces if he smiles. For all these reasons *Hamlet* remains the greatest of revenge plays, and the one that appealed most to its first hearers.

Keeping on trodden ground, I add a word on the poet's presumable view of life and human nature, as expressed by Hamlet. We must here borrow a little of Hamlet's scepticism, in face of some of the theories that have been aired about his creator. It is not sound to talk of Shakespeare's mind as 'universal,' except in its possibilities. Many great and vital thoughts were current in his time, which there is no sign at all of his wishing to appropriate. Bacon dreamed about the future of knowledge, Bruno about the make of the world and the soul, Hooker about the nature of law, the Platonists about the earthly and celestial love. There are a few disputable passages in Shakespeare, which it is easy to strain too far; but the truth is that these ideas appear not to have interested him. He had a sufficiency of ideas without them. If they reach him at all, it is through byways, and then they are changed out of recognition. We have to go carefully in tracing these alleged influences. The safest way may be, when we are in presence of a passage that seems to betray their presence, to ask ourselves whether it would have been conceivable in an English author of a hundred or two hundred years earlier. We can say of some of Hamlet's sentences that they cannot be so conceived. 'O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have had bad dreams.' Chaucer or Dante would scarcely have spoken thus of infinite space. The mediaeval mind, the old astronomy, thought of the fixed stars as pinned down in a kind of cupola or limiting vault. The Copernican view was still, in 1604, a heresy and an hypothesis. And the very next words suggest the still-lingering boundaries set to the imagination: 'this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical *roof* fretted with golden fire.' Again, we can hardly think of a mediaeval poet, even

Jean de Meung for example, ironically tracing the painful transformations of matter, 'the passage of a king through the guts of a beggar,' or the fortunes in the bunghole of 'Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay.'

But the famous and glorious sentences that follow Hamlet's confession of melancholy are far more significant. They are, to speak within bounds, one of the first, as they remain the greatest, expressions in epitome of the new conception of mankind: the conception which came so late to England, after blossoming first in Italy and then in the France of Rabelais and Montaigne, and which would have been not only alien but inconceivable to any of the great Englishmen or the great Florentines of the fourteenth century. They vindicate not only human nature, but the Shakespearean drama which is its mirror; and it matters nothing that Hamlet utters them only to disavow them. The passage shows once more how great ideas, and these only, can make the greatest speech and the greatest rhythm possible; for Speech and Rhythm are the offspring of thought and passion.

'What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!'

I would not wish to perorate, or to build too much upon too little; but here surely, in fewer than fifty words Hamlet challenges the whole conception of human character and destiny voiced from a thousand pulpits and brooding for centuries over the spirit of our race. He challenges the time-honoured contempt for the body, and for the free reason of man. And we cannot doubt whence, in the long run, Hamlet's ideal comes. It comes from Greece, from the salvage of Greek art and letters; in particular, perhaps, from Plato and the Athenian dramatists; and from the best Roman spirits who succeeded them. But immediately, whence came it? It was in the air round Shakespeare. The contemporary of Sidney, the friend of Jonson, could have got it from talk

and not from books. Still, this broader and truer view of mankind which Shakespeare had never expressed before, though he had partially embodied it in his Hotspur, in his Henry the Fifth, and in the women of his comedies, is to be found in a book which he is known at some time to have read.

Much has been written on the obligations of Shakespeare to the *Essays* of Montaigne. Many parallel passages have been, all too forcibly, discovered. But it is rather a general than a detailed debt that can be safely asserted. I would not lean too much, as some critics do, upon the fact;[1] but a fact it is, that between the first quarto of *Hamlet*, in which there is less of speculative matter, and the second quarto, in which there is abundance, Florio's translation of the *Essays* appeared. This event, perhaps not quite by chance, coincides with that fuller and freer play of philosophic musing which is found in the tragedies, in the later tragi-comedies, and in the enigmatical *Troilus and Cressida*. Montaigne gave, or could have given, to the poet an immense example of imperturbable free thinking, in the strict sense of the term; that is, of thinking that nothing can stop. And Hamlet is a thinker of this kind. No traditional authority, no convention, no preconceived formula, can hold him. His weighing of pros and cons, his doubts and reassurances as to the afterlife, his splendid disregard of consistency, his unimportance to himself, his curiosity about himself, his criticisms of himself, all show strong affinities with the Montaigne of the *Essays*, which are a treasury of observations, deep or curious or frivolous but wholly submissive to fact, of this world as the writer faithfully sees it.

A single instance may be given, though it has often been cited before. Shakespeare, or Hamlet, is much nearer to Montaigne in his conception of friendship than he is to

[1] See J. Churton Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare*, 1904, pp. 277-96: a cautious study of parallels (without undue assertion of 'influence'): e.g., Hamlet's words 'What a piece of work!' are very like a famous passage in the *Apology of Raimond Sebonde*.

Bacon. To Bacon the conversation of his friend is in the nature of medicine:

'You may take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain; but no receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, as in a kind of civil shrift and confession.'

Bacon certainly takes out the taste of these drugs when he adds that 'it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness.' But if we turn to the relationship between Horatio and Hamlet, to Hamlet's praise of the man that 'is not passion's slave,' and to Horatio's forgoing of the luxury of death in order to vindicate the good name of Hamlet; here, plainly, is a reach beyond Bacon. The *Sonnets* in some way show a closer likeness still to the words of Montaigne concerning Etienne de la Boétie. Montaigne thinks friendship a safer affair than love, but we may let that pass. He says, quite in the sense of Shakespeare:

'Our minds have jumped so unitedly together, they have with so fervent an affection considered of each other, and with like affection so discovered and sounded, even to the bottom of each other's heart and entrails, that I did not only know his as well as mine own, but I would verily rather have trusted him concerning any matter of mine, than myself.'

And soon afterwards, Montaigne strikes a note which is absent even in Shakespeare:

'for truly, if I compare all the rest of my forepassed life, which although I have, by the mere mercy of God, passed at rest and ease, and except the loss of so dear a friend free from all grievous affliction, with an ever-quietness of mind . . . if, as I say, I compare it all unto the four years I so happily enjoyed the sweet company and dear-dear society of that worthy man, it is nought but a vapour, nought but a dark and irksome light.'

This is but one facet of the likeness between the two writers. With all Montaigne's probing scepticism, there underlies his work the feeling that the scepticism can be *risked*, and that human nature is in truth deeply and for ever interesting, not inherently bad, full of endless possibility and hope. The ancients are his great treasure-house of example and authority for this assumption; and his own observation bears it out. It would be hard to point to any other writers of the time who give such an impression more strongly than the French philosopher and the English poet. Hamlet, at any rate, reflects something for which Montaigne may perhaps rank as the most representative of Frenchmen; the belief in the freedom of the natural soul and in reason.

I end with a suggested caution. It is but half-true to say that Hamlet speaks to all men so strongly, because he anticipates the temper of modern doubt or modern melancholy. Better say that the modern mind has been to some extent propelled towards that temper by the figure of Hamlet; or, better still, that the new free intellectual movement of the time, which happens to be so sharply mirrored in Hamlet, is the ancestral cause, and the first fully conscious expression, of the modern impulse towards untrammelled thought. However this may be, it is noteworthy that many modern critics have read themselves in, or into, the spirit of Hamlet: Coleridge laying emphasis on the mental vacillation due to over-thinking, and Hazlitt on the melancholy that is caused by savage loneliness. Hamlet has become one of the proverbial, or world-figures, that Shakespeare has left us; but he is different from the rest. Nobody has ever really felt *like* Iago, or Shylock, or Falstaff. Real as they are, they stand outside us, and they are not specially figures of Shakespeare's time, despite their Italian or English colouring. But Hamlet we can and must feel, at least at moments, that we resemble; or we plume ourselves on thinking so. And yet we can only begin to understand the rudiments of Hamlet by steadily regarding him as an Elizabethan.

Milton and Parties[1]

NO greater honour could fall to me from the hand of the English Association, whose aim we try to further in one of the northern capitals—we have several of them—than the perilous duty of celebrating the memory of Milton here. As I look down the profiles at this Attic feast, I wish that, instead of speaking, I were listening to some worthier scholar, perhaps to some sounder Puritan; but I also think of that delicate, festal, sociable side of Milton himself, of which he has left us some inkling; of his sensibility to an

> order so contriv'd as not to mix
> Tastes not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
> Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change.

And I remember how even in his august age, when the smouldering fires of his nature seemed to be banked, he liked cheerful converse in the evening, and also now and again, says the authority, 'a pipe of tobacco.' To the last, there are flashes of a graciousness, an amenity about Milton, there is a kind of warm gray spread over spaces of *Paradise Regained*, which lets us see how much was left in him of the *Penseroso*, how much of it had nobly outlived all the strange tempestuous voyages of his imagination and intellect. One likes to think how (to speak venturously) he carried this graciousness into the other world. For we remember how, 'very grave but very neatly attired in the fashion of the day,' he appeared in a dream, in the year 1793, to William Cowper, and received his admiration. 'He answered me by a gentle inclination of the head. He then grasped my hand affectionately, and with a smile that charmed me, said, "Well, you for your part will do well also." He took his [leave] with an air of the most perfect good breeding.' Cowper deserved this, and therefore had the right to praise. It is not easy to assume such a right,

[1]An address read at the dinner of the English Association (November 27, 1908) in commemoration of the Milton Tercentenary, and printed as Leaflet No. 9 (1909) of the Association.

for there is something about Milton that silences empty praise—what with his defeat of the centuries that have passed—and that makes us chary to anticipate 'all-judging Jove.' Nor are these stray words addressed to such an attempt: for perhaps there is more need now to understand than to praise. A tercentenary! it sounds as though it were high time to understand. But there are things in Milton that require clearing up, and though I am chiefly here to ask questions (in the intervals of repeating the obvious) rather than to solve them, I will say that in Milton's art there is that which has never been properly caught and characterized. One thing is the style, the movement, the half-invisible veinings, of his latest poems, and another is the exact colouring of his Horton poems. We want a fresh review of his prose, appreciative and methodized. For all this the heroic labours of Masson have laid a foundation. But now I am not saying much of his art and style, for they only served, after all, to give enduring form to some things in his mind and temper of which I prefer to speak. Milton's art and style serve to cover up, if also to express, a conflict within him—though not a conscious one, I do not say that for a moment—which is only the reflection of a larger conflict without him. Part of it goes on in English life to-day, and perhaps in some of ourselves.

We are creatures of the dead, and our political and doctrinal passions are the ghosts, or rather the re-embodiment, the transmigrated essence and result, the *Karma*, of theirs. More simply, and I suppose admittedly:—The parties and mental cleavages of the great civil war in some sense persist to-day, in the broad social divisions of the country and in their contrasting war-cries. In spite of all the other great historic forces that have come into play, in spite of the ambiguity of changing terms, *puritan*, *tory*, *popular*, and the bad fallacy of lightly transferring these to and fro between epochs of different complexion, much of that old schism persists. This may be a commonplace; it never came home to me till I lived in the North of England, that old theatre of war, where the

descendants of both parties are very distinguishably massed. Through all the complications and cross-purposes—of which the greatest, by the way, is that introduced by Whiggism—we feel, I say, the tug between the class that stands for the political and ecclesiastical hierarchy, for the fundamental principle of gentry, for tradition; the class with the cult of manners, yes, and still with four-fifths of the inheritance of humanism! —the tug between this class and that other one, which in its political instincts, its ritual, its homes, its reading, its language, its whole way of making its life and soul and conscience, is the opposite. Get out of the London whirl or of southern county life, and you find the Ironsides, now with rather a varnish of culture, with a cote-armure over the mail, but always ready to form up in line, and very like what they were. Delightful and attractive as the blended type of the Puritan gentleman is—a type tenacious too in its way—it is occasional, and does not bulk very large beside the serried armies on either hand. Nor should I hastily say that the author of *Colasterion* was the most perfect embodiment of that type. Well, I say the blood of one or other of these parties is in most of us. And I add that Milton has proved, for many historians and critics, a test case, that our judgment on him shows where our heart really lies. For an impartial, distant treatment of Milton is likely to be an empty and bloodless one, if it means that these disputes are a mere matter of that intellect to us, and that *neither* element is alive to us; but that all the same, if we have *both* elements alive in us, to some such impartial treatment of him it is high time, at his tercentenary, to come. I am not here to do more than name some of the errors that seem to lie in the path of such a treatment.

With those who take Milton not only for a great champion of popular liberty, which he is, but also for a typical out-and-out Puritan, and who love or hate him for that reason either openly or covertly, we are entitled, I think, at this season of the world, to be rather short. I saw in a magazine the other day 'that Milton is the very embodiment of Hebraism.'

We feel that Macaulay sees little else clearly in Milton except a particular kind of politician. We feel that Johnson, whose admiration—what there is of it—is of all the more value for being extorted, has a sound sense of all that element in Milton, which, if valid, would annihilate the ideas by which Johnson lived; and we feel that this gives value to Johnson's criticims. I do not mean this wholly at Johnson's expense; for Johnson was really a mystic, and Milton seems to have been to his roots unmystical, and in that way he most imperfectly represents Protestantism. *Omnia abeunt in mysterium;* Bunyan feels that in his Protestant way, just as Johnson feels it in his Catholic way: but if Milton had anything answering to what is technically called *experience*, there is little sign of it. I say this in passing, both to show what we can get out of a critic who is violently unjust to Milton, and also for the benefit of a text at which I shall presently arrive. But we need not stay longer for the moment with those who like or dislike Milton because they think he is a Puritan out and out, a man who for good or ill is all of one piece. It is another line of comment that I wish to criticize.

People point to Milton and say: 'Look at his humanistic learning, and then at his hatred of privilege; look how he uses the form and morality of Sophocles for his *Samson*, or the form and movement of Homer and Virgil for his epics, and then look at his sublime versification of the Protestant theology. Look at his deep, his quintessential scholarship. See how he distilled all the imagery, the themes, the very grammar of the Greeks into his own, and then see how he did all this in the service of the Protestant conscience, of the individual soul and its rights. What a superb harmony of opposites! What a reconciliation of the two forces that seemed for ever at strife, the intellectual current that came from the Renaissance, and the spiritual current that came from the Reformation, which meet and unite in Milton, in one great, broad stream! Could there be a finer union than

we find in Milton of the party that stood for culture, amenity, letters, and beauty, with the party that stood for conscience, liberty, for the naked claims of the soul? Let us take heart by this,' we are told, 'and never suppose that that strife is immitigable'!

Well, another conclusion can be drawn. I would say, first, that only in a very mutilated sense does Milton stand for either Renaissance or Reformation: and, secondly, that he does not, save at a few isolated points, harmonize them at all; nothing *can* harmonize them; that he rather exhibits their essential discord, though this truth is covered up by powers his of style and execution; and that he is so interesting because he tends to harmonize them and does not do so, though he shows no signs of knowing that he does not do so; and that this discord in Milton is at more than one point *our* discord; and that therefore his appeal is enduring so long as this latter discord, in the England of to-day, in our own minds, persists. This may be treated as a commonplace by by many who hear me, but it is worth while thinking over, for others may treat it as a paradox.

Milton is a great political Protestant, and a great ecclesiastical Protestant; that is true. If he belongs to no school, and is a sect by himself, with his own heresies—Arian leanings, Mosaic polygamy, fancy republicanism, and the rest, he is only a Protestant the more; we need not labour that point. Herein he is a great example of a national type. I dare say he would have been a passive resister; he would probably have handed up his copy of Salmasius or *Eikon Basilike* to the officers of the law in settlement. But although he was all this, and had his odd private eschatology, he seems to have missed, as I suggested, the deepest thing in Protestantism, its *experience;* and I think that that lack, and not his unfamiliar poetry and learning, is the reason why he was never really taken by Protestantism to its bosom. Then they say he was the son of the Renaissance; and so, on its Greek and plastic side, he was. But, on its intellectual side, save at one point of the field of

political thought, and perhaps in the field of educational theory, he was not a son of the Renaissance at all. As regards the current of modern speculation that was set in motion by Bruno and Montaigne, and was to be continued, in diverse senses, by Hobbes and Spinoza, the Renaissance might as well never have existed for Milton. It did not exist for him as it existed for Shakespeare, in whose verse the spirit of the time plays so many strange and wandering airs. Milton had a very mediaeval side to his brain; he was anti-critical; and this was well, for he could never have written *Paradise Lost* had he been otherwise. For much as he embroiders his story, it is true and literal to him in its essence, as the hard, dry backing of texts in his *Christian Doctrine* shows. He has the necessary basis of literal conviction; and if his strong mind had worked freely upon the documents, as the oppositely built mind of Hobbes, for instance, worked upon them, he might have lost that basis. But this is not exactly a 'harmony' of Renaissance and Reformation.

Let us remind ourselves of one or two instances where the classical and the Protestant spirit clash rather than mix in Milton, especially in his poetry.

Paradise Lost is the tale of civil war in the universe, where the foes of privilege and monarchy, the Cromwell and Hampden of heaven, secede, fight, fill the stage, occupy the sympathy, and then fail. The poet forces himself to join in the suitable thanksgiving, but his power begins to flag when he does so. He forces himself to disfigure his heroes. His deity turns them into snakes, as some rancorous deity might in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. That, indeed, is rather a contradiction *within* Puritanism. The public and rebel passion, which Milton felt in himself and saw amongst his friends, can only, in the nature of his story, be on the wrong side; it can only inspire those whom he calls devils. He could not get out of this contradiction once he had chosen his story, which was the history of the universe, as his party read it, set in a classic frame. And his classic memories helped rather

than increased the contradiction: his memories of Prometheus and Capaneus. Here the classical spirit does begin to be at odds with his official sympathies; and in another, a minor way, the Renaissance, though not the classics directly, increases or brings out the contradiction; for one of Milton's great masters of language was Marlowe:

> I ban their souls to everlasting pains
> And extreme tortures of the fiery deep.

Which poet wrote these lines? And more than that; Satan, it is often said, is a Marlowe-like figure, has touches of *Tamburlaine*, touches of *Faustus;* in Satan, Milton comes nearest to that new freedom of the questing intellect which I said—perhaps too sweepingly—that he was without. In the other camp is his much modified but still recognizable Calvinistic God. The moment we press even thus far into Milton's story, can we feel that it has concord or unity? He is much more interesting, like all imperfect things and persons—like ourselves—when we find that there is not unity in him.

Look again at his representation of love and women. Milton has not much chivalry properly so called, though in some of his sonnets he shows a great courtesy. But he had a very clear and noble feeling for plastic beauty, for the human form, for sculpture, as we see from his Eve; nay, even for a sort of beautiful decorative luxury. His sonnet to his wife proves, too, how he realized the pure, gracious, and heroic in feminine character; his dreams of love, of Eros, Ourania, which are really better recorded in his Divorce Tracts than in *Comus*, were of the noblest; I omit the evidence in this company. But, in that pure plastic sensibility, he is nearly the last of our Renaissance artists for 200 years—I mean almost literally 200 years—until the poets of the middle nineteenth century. We need not dwell on the other side, on his strident, barbarous theories of women, with their touch of John Knox, on his 'Turkish contempt for females.' Is not this a discord, and if so, is it an extinct discord?

Lastly, there is Milton's moral theology. The fall and retrieval of Samson, in his hands, is a far deeper topic than the fall and retrieval of man had been, because he now started from a Greek kind of theology, not from a peculiar Protestant myth or heresy; and the Greek way of looking at things recognizes deeper and more real complications in human nature and destiny than does the theme of *Paradise Lost*, and settles them in a way that is nearer to truth. To pay for your fault, in one act, with your own blood and with the blood of others, whom it was your very fault before to have spared; so to fulfil your destiny, and so to leave 'nothing for tears,' and so also to leave the beholder 'in calm of mind, all passion spent': this idea opens out spiritual horizons after the manner of the best Greek plays. The effect in no way depends on the historical truth of the story, as in *Paradise Lost*. Milton no doubt felt deeply that the old Hebrew episode lent itself to this kind of classic treatment in its very nature, and so he chose it. But this is not a union of the Reformation spirit and Sophocles; for Milton ceases to be a Protestant when he writes of such a retrieval as Samson's; it is a union of the Hebrew spirit and Sophocles, which is a different thing. When he does become Protestant and Puritan in this poem, it is because he interposes in person and speaks as the voice of a great, dispossessed, and righteous public cause. But here he leaves the subject; for it is clear that so far as Samson is Milton he is not an offender, and is the martyr of disaster rather than the erring subject of a tragedy.

No; if there was ever a harmony in Milton, it was before the latent opposition of these principles came out in him; it was in his early writing, when his verse, Latin or English, was always nobly sensuous, and only at times passionate: in his verses *Ad Patrem*, in *Arcades*, or the beginning of *Comus*, or even when Ens comes in with the Predicaments. When he did enter into warfare, we cannot say of him, as he says of the martyr Polycarp, 'that the fire, when it came to proof,

would not do his work, but, starting off, like a full sail from the mast, did but reflect a golden light upon his unviolated limbs.' The fire did its work; it seemed to do a doubtful work, to destroy the happy harmony, the *euphuia*, that radiates from *L'Allegro* or from *Epitaphium Damonis;* it did destroy just that: we can no longer say that the temperate, Puritan upbringing has given us a young man recalling Plato's characters. All through the prose works Milton's undying sense of beauty and his conscience tend to be at strife — I mean that the two interests conflict, not that Milton feels they do so—and that also is what I really mean by *our* discord; and when he regains himself, and goes back to art, the same opposition, as I have pleaded, persists, and is only the more fixed because a far ampler and a more nearly perfect art is its vehicle. We need not choose between the speech of his youth and that of his age, because we have them both; but if we ask which of the two means more to us, which we would rather keep at the cost of the other were the hard choice put to us, there is but one answer. For there seem but two things eternal on this earth, form and strife; and for the fullest expression of strife we need the most monumental form. Then only does the master take his seat, like Milton, among the immortals, and earn repose. The farewell of his Manoah to his Samson, Milton had versified in Latin, almost word for word, long before, over the friend of his youth, in lines that may be our salutation to Milton:

> Nec te Lethaeo fas quaesivisse sub Orco:
> Nec tibi conveniunt lacrimae, neque flebimus ultra;
> Ite procul, lacrimae; purum colit aethera Damon . . .
> Heroumque animas inter, divosque perennes
> Aethereos haurit latices et gaudia potat
> Ore sacro.

Poetic Romancers after 1850[1]

I

THE mid-nineteenth century is receding, the great poetic romances are passing their jubilees. *Idylls of the King* were written gradually; the earliest, *Morte d'Arthur*, appeared in 1842. The real overture was in 1858, with William Morris's volume, *The Defence of Guenevere*. Hawker of Morwenstow's noticeable fragment, *The Quest of the Sangraal*, was published fifty-eight years ago. Within the next ten years that stage will have been passed by the First Series of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, which contains *Laus Veneris* and *After Death;* by *The Life and Death of Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise;* and by Dante Gabriel Rossetti's first original volume, which contains *Stratton Water* and *Sister Helen*. *Rose Mary*, *The White Ship*, *The King's Tragedy*, are later; so are Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung* and most of his prose romances. These works are my material to-day; I shall shun formal judgments, and the quest for 'sources,' and inquire into some stray characteristics. I keep to poetic narrative, and omit the lyric except when it is a story. In some sense all the examples can be called mediaeval, if not in subject, still in inspiration; at least, few of them would have existed, or would have been the same, without Chaucer, or Froissart, or *The King's Quair*, or Malory, or the old ballads, or the Sagas. Their mediaevalism—a vague term—is one obvious clue to them. Another is their pictorial quality. It is present because many of the authors either were, or were in close alliance with, painters and designers, or simply had, like Tennyson, a picturing mind. Judged by favour, these stories are holding their own. They are flowers alive, they are not mere tombstones in the cemetery of the literary histories. Many of them still attract those young minds and fresh, which do

[1] The Warton Lecture on English Poetry (No. V), read to the British Academy, Oct. 28, 1914, and printed for the Academy (*Proceedings*, vol. vi).

not care for, but nevertheless help to constitute, the historical judgment. Still, the more hardened student, who has to resist the ill effects of larger information, comes forward from time to time to ask, supposing these works really bid fair to last, by virtue of what soul or quality in them they do so, and whether he really hopes that last they may. He cannot but glance back to the monuments that mark the territory won, peacefully or otherwise, in the campaign of Romance, that is, of the poetic story which does not belong to the real world; to the *Reliques*, *Ælla*, *The Ancient Mariner*, *The Border Minstrelsy*, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, in poetry; and in scholarship, to the labours that unveiled older monuments still, Tyrwhitt's *Chaucer*, Warton's *History of English Poetry*, Ellis's *Specimens*. By these scholars the old stories were made known; they could not tell how the poets would enter into such labours and leave matter for the historians of the future. Thomas Warton, whose name I have the honour of saluting to-day, did more than write history; he was touched with the poetic spirit of one who was himself nourished on Romance, the youthful Milton. He too wrote his ode on *Arthur's Grave*, and cheerfully appreciated the Pleasures of Melancholy. It may be in keeping with the spirit of this foundation to recall some features of the narrative poets who continue the line.

It is possible to miss the plain fact that the age of Dickens and Morris was the great age of the story, as Edgar Allan Poe somewhere says that we miss the biggest signs over the fronts of the shops. For the term story includes both the novel and the romance. The eighteenth century had the novel, but it had the romance only during its latter half. The two preceding centuries had the *Arcadia* and its following, and also a broken line of poetic stories, some of great power and beauty, from *Hero and Leander* to *Theodore and Honoria;* but the novel was nascent. Compared with the age of Scott, the ampler mass and range of the novel in the later period, after 1850, may be thought to weight the scale. And it is not

only the age of the story, but the story is its best product, unless the lyric be a rival; for the line of lyric from Tennyson to the present Laureate compares with the line from Spenser to Henry Vaughan. But the drama, the long speculative poem, are not such in the age of Tennyson and Rossetti as to compare with the story; and one of the kinds, the dramatic monologue, implicitly contains a story. The time is rich in eloquent and coloured prose, and in essay and criticism; but these last are not primary imaginative forms, like the story, and cannot rival it. I omit the novel and keep to the romances. What works are denoted by that term and its derivatives is plain from the instances given, from *The Defence of Guenevere* onwards; what I would suggest it to mean, inwardly speaking, may appear later. The writers in question are all poets, and they are all tellers; they have the gift that comes and goes as capriciously as the poetic gift. These two gifts are always getting divorced and always reuniting, and their ties are worthy notice.

II

IN one way verse is a separable accident of a story. Morris relates equally well, though in a different way, in verse and prose. There are few of whom this can be said. Crabbe, or Browning in *The Inn Album*, may relate well all the time, but the poetry is intermittent. The authors of *Endymion* or of *Tristram of Lyonesse* are poets all the time, but the press of imaginary, or the poetic energy, easily swamp the telling, so that we ask what is really happening. The fastidious ballad audience, courtly or simple, would refuse to listen to these poems. A story that is not lucid or proportioned when it is *heard* is a bad story; merely reading it is not a test. The splendour of *Tristram* is in the lyrical element, in the sea-elegy, where the poet triumphs. It is otherwise with the ballads of Rossetti, and with all but the earliest verse of Morris; the poetry never fails, and the hearers can always follow. Doubtless, in the *Defence of Guenevere* and its companions, the

poetic power, with its hold on what used to be called the 'language of passion,' and its range from soft melody to noble discords, sometimes outruns the narrative power. But the story always struggles clear, and often is perfectly told; it is needless to plead for *The Haystack in the Floods*. And the art of inlaying the author's own tale in a borrowed one is achieved. The setting, the particulars 'concerning Geffray Teste Noire,' come from Froissart, who, as we are told, 'knoweth not' the history of the knight and lady whose bones William Morris himself found in a wood and buried, for pure pity, in 'a little chapel of squared stone.' There is no jar as we pass from one reporter to the other. Morris, especially when he used Greek legends, remained the most unforcedly mediaeval of the group, and I suppose that no considerable English poet has steered so clear of the Renaissance and all its works.

It may be noticed how the choice of mould and measure affects the march of a story, as a story. Coleridge has shown finally how the presence of metre acts on the language, 'paves the way to other distinctions,' and 'medicates the atmosphere.' But metre also acts on the events. Things happen, passions speak, and situations work out, differently in blank verse, couplet, and stanza. Our mental vision is affected by a special rhyme-arrangement.

These romancers, amongst them, use most of the possible story-measures, and we can sometimes compare the result with the prose original in Malory or a saga. Blank verse in Tennyson's hands, in *Morte d'Arthur* or *The Holy Grail*, 'tolls slowly.' This is the only thing that can be said against his noble passage from the *Iliad*. Every step in the action is counted aloud, like those of Bedivere going to the lake. Nothing could suit the scene better, but the movement is not so good for battle and wayfaring, despite all the varieties and modulations achieved. In *Morte d'Arthur* the original, where it is incorporated, is longer, sentence for sentence, than the verse, but it sounds shorter, and this is due to the

metre. Malory has: 'And but if thou do not now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee I will slay thee with my own hands'; which becomes:

> But if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
> I will arise and slay thee with my hands.

Malory has, '"Now put me in the barge," said the king'; the verse is but one syllable more, yet it sounds, and therefore is, much longer, with its four emphatic open vowels to two:

> Then murmured Arthur: 'Place me in the barge.'

Tennyson perfected this decorated quasi-epical style; as with Virgil's, its real unit is the long harmonized paragraph. There are traces of different epic style, not thus harmonized, but original and effective still, in that eccentric unequal fragment, *The Quest of the Sangraal*. The Vicar of Morwenstow's King Arthur is toasted in Old English, and his Merlin writes a Hebrew inscription on a 'runic stone'; but his blank lines have been unduly forgotten. The company is parting before they seek the Holy Grail. Nothing is etherealized, they are solid eaters and drinkers, as they must have been if they really existed.

> Now feast and festival in Arthur's hall:
> Hark! stern Dundagel softens into song!
> They meet for solemn severance, knight and king:
> Where gate and bulwark darken o'er the sea.
> Strong men for meat, and warriors at the wine:
> They wreak the wrath of hunger on the beeves,—
> They rend rich morsels from the savoury deer,—
> And quench the flagon like Brun-guillie dew!
> Hear! how the minstrels prophesy in sound,
> Shout the King's Waes-hael, and Drink-hael the Queen.

This manner is not only spirited, but it is so far Homeric that it discourages needless embroidery and reflection. But these things are almost enforced by a stave of three or four interlaced rhymes. Certainly Ariosto, broider as he may, makes

everything move; in his octave he shoots forward, he varies the pace and the altitude, he dives and glides like an airship, and he gets on. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* verse is more like Cleopatra's barge, it keeps the coloured and pennoned story at a majestic rate of progress. But Morris prefers, what Spenser also used, Chaucer's verse of seven lines; it is not too hard, it can be swift, but it calls for much spacing-out with scenery, colour, and rumination. It is the secret of Morris (and Lessing would have approved) to unite these things with *movement*. In *The Story of Rhodope* there is this sure, not speedy, movement; not a tint or trait but is used to accompany movement.

> Now was her foot upon the gangway-plank;
> Now over the green depths and oars blood-red
> Fluttered her gown, and from the low green bank
> Above the sea a cry came, as her head
> Gleamed golden in the way that westward led,
> And on the deck her feet were, but no more
> She looked back then unto the peopled shore.

The same stanza can also hold a little poem, a speech uttered in a breath and a half, in which the sudden chime at the fifth line slightly changes the thought. The effect is not unlike that of a shortened or arrested sonnet. So Rhodope:

> 'Ah me!' she said, 'what thing do ye demand?
> Is it a little thing that I should go,
> Leaving my people and my father's land,
> To wed some proud great man I do not know?
> I look for no glad life: yea, it is so,
> That if a little love were left in me,
> In vain your keel had cleft our girdling sea.'

The measure, and in part the manner, go back to the greatest of our poetical romances, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Other things Morris learned, or learned the better, from his master, so modestly twice invoked: the use of colour, of costume, or variegation, the leisurely flower-like unfolding

of emotions and events. He does not like Chaucer play with general ideas, such as the theory of free-will or of dreams, nor is he impatient with himself, nor has he Chaucer's bright digressions and back-eddies. There is more unity of mood in *The Earthly Paradise* than Chaucer ever wishes to attain. The Elders and Wanderers see the story's end in the beginning, an end that is marked with melancholy even when prosperous; why hurry towards it? So the tale goes, gently, as we know: whether in stanza or couplet; and, so far, it is the mood that reacts on the versification, rather than this upon the action.

It is one thing to keep the reader delightfully going with the current of the story—overture, development, catastrophe—with the trappings, the landscape, the eloquence, and the melody, all perfectly managed, and it is another thing to take him by the throat in passing, by some sudden imaginative disclosure of God's truth. I will not quote passages about Sarpedon or Dido, but something simpler. In the old folk-ballad, *The Wife of Usher's Well*, the three drowned sons come back from the underworld to their mother's house, sit through the night silent, and take farewell at cockcrow, bidding her farewell. Who was the unrecorded genius who knew that the eldest son would further say:

> And fare ye well, the bonny lass
> That kindles my mother's fire?

When the old man, in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*, cannot get Death to take him, he appeals to the Earth:

> I knokke with my staf, erly and late,
> And seye, 'Leve mooder, let me in.'

For these strokes I would give most of the *Earthly Paradise*, though there are traces of them in such grim versified anecdotes as *The Proud King*. Those single combats in Morris's verse and prose, so endless, so hearty—we know the soldierly temper of the man—who cares for their personages or their issue? are they not enacted in a kind of ghostly silence, like

those of the warriors who sprang from the teeth sown by Jason? There is more in his first volume of what we lack. In *The Chapel in Lyonesse*, in the last speech of Sir Ozana, there is the piercing note that almost disappeared from Morris's work, no one knows why:

> Christ help! I have but little wit:
> My life went wrong; I see it writ:
> 'Ozana of the hardy heart,
> Knight of the Table Round,
> Pray for his soul, Lords, on your part;
> A good knight he was found.'
> Now I begin to fathom it. [*He dies.*

These effects Morris attained, it may be, more often in his lyrics than in his stories: *Mother and Son* and *The Message of the March Wind*, which belong to the later years, are examples. And, to my apprehension, there is more sheer humanity, more even of an odd cunning psychology, in the prose tales like those of Birdalone, with all their superficial remoteness, than in the long poems. There the people are like people in an arras—like the tapestried huntsman in Matthew Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*—and some one is calling upon them to come down out of it and live, and is lifting his magic pipe to do so; but he has forgotten the call, and they look down at him almost pathetically, in their shining dresses, with their large eyes, and they never come. This is not to unsay our praises of the exquisite pattern, the durable stuff, the fastness of the dye. Both kinds of art are good, though one of them is nearer to life. With all such differences, Morris is a great teller, a true follower of Chaucer, and sits near him in some region where there is time for long stories. Some of the shades, of dreamers or amorists, ask for new ones taken from the legendary upper room that was shelved with unpublished verses; others, the shades of the author of *Njala* or the historian Sturla, for something like the Burning of Flugumyri, or the murder of Sigmund in the saga of the

Faroese, done into the verse of *Sigurd the Volsung;* a poem which may be considered for a moment.

The verse and speech of *Sigurd*, there is little doubt, is the greatest invention of the last century for a long action of heroic stamp. It has shown itself equal to most of the things wanted in an epic recital. Never can we disparage the ballad-tune, the tune of *Adam Bell* or of *The Fire of Frendraught*. But Morris's is an instrument that can hold out longer, and that rises to the call of harder matter. It is a nobly progressive kind of verse, with a thrust forward in the middle of almost every line. It is good for the decoration, which is part of the action, and for the speeches, which always move. It is good for the long level stretches of the story, and for passages of love and of war. It can sometimes break down, it can get too loose and fluid, like an improvisation, or again it can be too consonantal and rocky. And it is not salient, like the Latin hexameter; but it is undulant, as the Greek hexameter is in another way. The lines go in pairs, but the rhymes are unable to stop the action, they only define it. As ever, Morris amplifies, like Swinburne, while Rossetti packs. He had his own version of *Volsunga Saga* before him; the original is a late prose compilation rather dryly put together, but it keeps some of the great colloquies and all the great situations of the early Nibelung tale. Morris weaves in bits of the older Norse poems which also refer to the legend. He makes words into sentences, and sentences into pages, and adds all the scenery and the costume; and, above all, he adds, he reads *in*, the fate-ridden emotion, the sense that the characters are working towards a half-known disaster; they are like projectiles that chance to meet in mid-air. He reads in what he thought to be the 'religion of the North'; it is really his own. He exalts the temper of the hero who faces and furthers such an ending, and he has also the sense that beyond the death of all the protagonists and of the present order 'the new sun beams on Baldur.' This foreshadows the social break-up and renovation which became his own article of

faith. It gives a background to the legend, which almost carries through the dark and barbarous elements. His style, his versification, rise to such a design. If the poem were stronger in representing character, we might call it Homeric. But perhaps character is only the second thing in a story, as Aristotle says it is in a tragedy, compared to the fable. The actors are types, legendary figures, rather than individuals. As an instance of Morris's rich amplifying habit, and of the resource of his measure in pure description, any page would serve; I take the scene where Sigurd, under guidance of Odin, is choosing his horse. The original has:

> 'They drave the horses down into the deeps of the river, and all came back to land but one horse; and that horse Sigurd chose for himself; grey he was of hue, and young of years, great of growth, and fair to look on, nor had any man yet crossed his back.'

Then the twain sped on together, and they drave the horses on
Till they came to a rushing river, a water wide and wan;
And the white mews hovered o'er it; but none might hear their cry
For the rush and the rattle of waters, as the downlong flood swept by.
So the whole herd took the river and strove the stream to stem,
And many a brave steed was there; but the flood o'ermastered them:
And some, it swept them downward, and some won back to bank,
Some, caught by the neck of the eddies, in the swirling hubbub sank;
But one of all swam over, and they saw his mane of grey
Toss over the flowery meadows, a bright thing far away:
Wide then he wheeled about them, then took the stream again
And with the waves' white horses mingled his cloudy mane.

But I dwell no more on mechanism and its effects; the plea for having done so is the interest taken in mechanism by the poets themselves. Dante, Ronsard, and Dryden, take no objection to discussing it, and are not afraid of technical language. I pass to another point in this chapter of the progress of poesy, namely, the renewal of the ballad by the romancers.

III

THE practice throws some light on the processes, so much disputed, by which ballad and romance were originally, mediaevally, intermixed. I am one of those who believe that to confuse these two forms, historically or aesthetically, is to be deaf to the difference of the instrument. There was plenty of give-and-take between them, and there were plenty of intermediate types and formulae in common. But the origins, the essential conventions, the fashion of narrative, and the temper are different. To call the ballads, such as *The Wife of Usher's Well*, or *Sir Patrick Spens*, the derivatives, or *débris* of lost romances, or of the romance generally, is not only to say what lacks evidence, but is to confuse species; it is almost like saying that Drayton's lyric on *Agincourt* can only be the *débris* of a drama on Henry the Fifth. All the same, there was in the nineteenth century, as in the fifteenth, a good deal of contact between the species, and new varieties arise. In the latter period, a vast amount of experimenting—more than can be guessed by those who have not looked into it—had been done in this direction, what with Percy, Chatterton, and the writers of Scotland. Ballad-study went on steadily after Percy, and still goes on; ballad-making by men of letters came in irregular waves, as Scott noted that it had done in his own time. The simplest kind, the mimic folk-ballad, of which the test is whether it could really deceive if the author so wished, had been managed well by the humorist Robert Surtees, who did deceive Scott; and, at least for several verses together, by Scott himself,

Leyden, and James Hogg. It is a hard thing to do well, for it is to grow a plant out of its own soil. It is no paradox to say that the frankly literary ballad, of what Rossetti called 'the condensed and hinted order dear to the imaginative minds,' is less and not more artificial than the mimic ballad; for it really does grow in its own soil. Coleridge and Keats mastered it. It has (to change the figure) the folk-ballad for a more or less hidden base, out of which a lovely structure spires in a different style of architecture; it is, in fact, a romance. Before 1850, there had come a certain ebb in such production; afterwards both extremes, the simple-seeming and the confessedly elaborate, take new life. The poets of this second mediaeval Renaissance went back first of all to the true ballad, then to Coleridge and Keats, and they also had in their ears the tunes and themes of old romance. Ballads were made, not only by the chiefs, but by Hawker with his spirited Cornish ditties, and by William Bell Scott; there is poetic ore in his *Lady Janet* and his *Kriemhild's Tryste*, with their studious intricate refrains. The unbroken series that can be made between a perfect popular echo like Morris's *Welland River* and a pure piece of trained imagination like Rossetti's *Rose Mary* tempts us to forget that the extremes are still of different kinds, and how a mediaeval poem like *Hind Horn* is a casual cross between them.

In *Welland River*, the forsaken Ellayne (not Lancelot's Elaine) watches Sir Robert ride up Stamford Street with another lady; she drops a lily flower on his helm, bids him nurse-tend her, and regains him, the other lady being left stranded six fathoms from the Stamford Bridge:

He had a coat of fine red gold,
  And a bascinet of steel;
Take note the goodly Collayne sword
  Smote the spur upon his heel.

And by his side, on a fair jennet,
  There rode a fair lady,
For every ruby Ellayne wore,
  I count she carried three.

This is a perfect echo, not a parody; it has the drawl that we find in the old ballad-airs that are preserved. The literary poet, such as the author of the admirable *Keith of Ravelston*, Sydney Dobell, would not have 'taken note' or 'counted'; and the last line of the conclusion has the right sort of homeliness:

> He has kissed sweet Ellayne on the mouth,
> And fair she fell asleep.
> And long and long days after that
> Sir Robert's house she did keep.

This is not the favourite note of Morris in his youth; it is not like *The Blue Closet* or *The Chapel in Lyonesse*. Later, when he came to know the Northern ballad-store, he tossed off into English things like *Knight Aagen and Maiden Else*, but he did not excel *Welland River*. Swinburne showed all his skill and virtuosity in this kind of writing; but, in spite of his Border lineage, pieces like *The Bloody Son* or *The Brothers* strike us visibly as feats. Some of the ballads in his *Posthumous Poems* (ed. E. Gosse and T. J. Wise, 1917), have an even greater force and easier swing, and are indeed wondrous mimicries, or appropriations, of the popular manner. If they still strike us as feats, it is because the followings of the ballad diction, measure and sentiment, are so 'thick on the ground'; the true ballad itself is not so like! All the more that, as Mr Gosse points out, Swinburne set himself to reproduce the rugged surface and the frequently unmetrical lines of his originals; and the editor also conjectures, most colourably, that in doing this he went against the tradition of making such imitations too tidy; and he may well have refrained from printing the result in deference to Rossetti's views, and yet have kept both the MS. and his own opinion. *Lord Scales* and *Duriesdyke* are, to my ear, the most successful attempts. Mr Gosse's preface relates the origins of *Lord Soulis* and *The Worm of Spindlestoneheugh*. Yet Swinburne's real medium for a story was the lay—the lay as it came down from the fourteenth century through Scott's variations; the

lay made to a tune not unlike those which Chaucer, in *Sir Thopas*, jested at without real disapproval. The story in question comes from Malory, and the story and the tune triumph together; an unexpected triumph; for, to judge not merely from *Laus Veneris*—not, it is true, a story—but from *Tristram of Lyonesse*, we might have thought that any unlettered minstrel, or old sailor, could tell a tale better. But not so here. There are ballad-echoes, but the poem is a romantic lay.

'Alas,' King Arthur said, 'this day
I have heard the worst that woe might say;
For in this world that wanes away
I know not two such knights as they.'
  This is the tale that memory writes
Of men whose names like stars shall stand,
Balen and Balan, sure of hand,
Two brethren of Northumberland,
  In life and death good knights.

The master of these fused or compound forms is Rossetti. Each of his half-dozen ballads or romances has a different march and build. In each of them is evident one of the great marks of all his poetry; he is an inventor of forms. Certainly the fusion of language is not always perfect. In *The King's Tragedy* the speaker is Catherine Barlass, who is capable of talking like the poet of *Down Stream:*

That eve was clenched for a boding storm,
  'Neath a toilsome moon half-seen—

and sometimes like herself, really much like a ballad-speaker:

Like iron felt my arm, as through
  The staple I made it pass:—
Alack! it was flesh and bone—no more!
  'Twas Catherine Douglas sprang to the door,
But I fell back Kate Barlass.

This mixture of styles does not help the poet, though each is good in itself. It suggests a literary person helping out a

popular transmitter; a Percy, but a Percy of genius, imposing a thought-out-diction, though a sound one, on a natural and instinctive diction, and on genuine old material. But it remains true that Rossetti commands both styles; everywhere he has a hold on a naked plain language, biblical if he likes, and also on coloured elaborate language. And he harmonizes them; and this harmony of opposites in diction is a second characteristic. They are harmonized in *The White Ship*—the ship that took the son of Henry the First to drown. This might well have been an old ballad-theme, but it never was one. It is told *staccato*, in the rhyming pairs that occur in such ballads as *Earl Brand*. The effect is got by the silences between the couplets, which allow the emotion within the silence to sink into the ballad audience, whose tension we are to imagine:

> But for a' sae wounded Earl Bran was,
> He has set his lady on his horse.
>
> They rode till they came to the water o' Doune,
> And then he alighted to wash his wound.
>
> 'O Earl Bran, I see your heart's blood!'
> 'It is but the gleat of my scarlet hood.'

It is the same when the survivor from the White Ship is struggling in the water; and the modern imaginative note and the simpler primitive one are harmonized; the first passes into the second:

> The ship was gone and the crowd was gone,
> And the deep shuddered and the moon shone:
>
> And in a strait grasp my arms did span
> The mainyard rent from the mast where it ran;
> And on it with me was another man.
>
> Where lands were none 'neath the dim sea-sky,
> We told our names that man and I.

'O I am Godefroy de l'Aigle hight,
And son I am to a belted knight.'

'And I am Berold the Butcher's son,
Who slays the beasts in Rouen town.'

Rose Mary is at the other extreme; it has least in it of the ballad, of unforced popular speech. Like the unfinished *Bride's Prelude*, it is romance, of the lineage of *Christabel*, though the kind of glamour represented in it is different from Coleridge's. It has not only a fuller magic than any of Rossetti's tales except *Sister Helen*, a feat—I do not say a masterpiece—on which I must not begin to speak; but *Rose Mary* has a freer pace than the rest, and less of that painful effect of hydraulic pressure which is the risk attending on Rossetti's third great quality, his economy. 'Probably,' he says, 'the man does not live who could write what I have written more briefly than I have done.' This he could truly claim; the gift separates him from all his companions except his sister. In *Rose Mary* he escapes the risks; what could be briefer and yet freer than this?

The fountain no more glittered free;
The fruit hung dead on the leafless tree;
The flame of the lamp had ceased to flare;
And the crystal casket shattered there
Was emptied now of its cloud of air.

Made in 1871, this is the last long poem I can think of where the full deep glow of imaginative *belief* is sustained; not merely the 'willing suspension of disbelief,' for Rossetti had enough folklore in his blood to carry him beyond that. His ballads, indeed, have every quality except the unforced quietude of nature.

But I pass to another trait of the romancers to which I briefly ask your attention—their attitude towards the emotions they portray, on which I merely make a note. As for their attitude, I shall call it romantic, but it matters less to find a word for it than to see that it is there. What is it?

POETIC ROMANCERS

IV

THOSE thought-confounding words, 'classical' and 'romantic,' might be dealt with in the nominalist spirit of Hobbes, when he defines the terms of the schools, or the passions, in the *Leviathan*. Permit this *pastiche:*

> 'Books made by the Greeks and Romans, and by others whom we feign to be like unto them—*classics*. The name *classical* signifieth the qualities that we imagine all such books to have in common. Tales told while the Kingdom of Darkness was universal, during the last five hundred years thereof, and other tales that we feign to be like unto these—*romances*. The word *romantic* is air; it meaneth what quality we will, other than *classical;* which is to say that it is not something, which itself we comprehend not.'

I use the word all the same, not to add to the wreckage of definitions, but as handy for describing one trait of the romancers. When we call *Samson Agonistes* or a dialogue of Landor 'classical,' and *Isabella* or *Rapunzel* 'romantic,' we think first of the difference between severity and profusion, or between economy and expense of imagery, or between sculptured and looser irregular overladen structure, or between clear definition and a lunar rainbow of suggestion. We may also half-think of a moral contrast, between a certain austerity of note and passion unrestrained. Or we may say that the romancer, like the classical artist, seeks indeed for beauty, but that, unlike him, he wants it of any kind and at all costs, as a thing self-justified when once it is really found. Well, remembering how much the romancers talk about beauty in their verse, as some talk about grace and salvation, we can, if we like, say that their conscious quest is beauty in nature, in the human form, and also, doubtless, in the soul—conveyed by beautiful words. This is true, but something more is wanted. The distinction is, at bottom, not so much artistic or moral at all as psychological. If we get away from the form or measure employed; away

from the theme, be it love, or ecstasy of devotion, or magic; away from the type or source of the story, be it that of Jason or of Tristram; and think of the artist's own state of mind when he speaks for Medea or Sister Helen;—then the distinction sought for may possibly be that he *surrenders himself*, as the classical writer does not, to the emotion or passion to which the creature of his dream is also surrendered. He does not hold himself apart, and look out, or let us look out, into the world beyond, or the larger order, any more than Iseult or Brynhild do so. I do not mean that his hand shakes or that his mastery fails; but that he seeks, not not only dramatically but as it were really, to *be* the feeling that he portrays. When he speaks in person, as in Swinburne's *Ilicet*, and there is no *dramatis persona*, still he surrenders himself. Like the mystic, he tries to become the object desired in his own vision. It is a willing, head-over-ears self-identification without afterthought. Further, the romancer prefers, though not exclusively, subjects where the feeling is tragic. His note, indeed, is much the same when he exhibits happiness or religious rapture. But most of the great stories he tells are calamitous—perhaps most great stories are; and, more than that, they end in *unsolved* moods of trouble and dispeace, or of a milder melancholy unsolved: the trouble is not in the end overcome by Lancelot or Tristram, or the scholar in *The Writing on the Image*, who 'found the end of all,' as it is, or at least seems to be, overcome by Oedipus or Antigone or by Cordelia. The difference is like that between Lucretius and Tennyson's *Lucretius*. The classical poet has come through the fear of death which he disparages—

scire licet nobis nil esse in morte timendum;

and through the illusions of love which he portrays—

usque adeo incerti tabescunt volnere caeco;

who can doubt it? He is through, if only through. The tone is not simply ethical, it is that of the naturalist. He is aloof.

But Tennyson, that notable pathologist, here at least is a true romancer. *His* Lucretius has not come through; the citadel of his mind is touched, his 'dire insanity' is but half-repelled, he surrenders himself to his mood, and so does the poet. On the other hand, Tennyson's *Ulysses* is, in the sense now suggested, classical, though the subject comes not from Homer but from Dante. Dante's Ulysses in Hell repeats the last address that he had given to his mariners. I give it in John Carlyle's English:

> 'O brothers!' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not, to this the brief vigil of your senses that remains, experience of the unpeopled world behind the sun. Consider your origin; ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.'

That is my notion of a classical utterance, and so is Tennyson's adaptation of it. The speaker gets out of his present suffering, out of himself; he stands away, he passes into a larger order, and he transfers his passion to that. Behind the different ethical mood there is a different vision of *things*. Keeping to Dante, I should incline to say that in Rossetti's pictures of Paolo and Francesca there was very little of this detachment; the painter is absorbed first in the passion and then in the pity of the case, and is in frank sympathy. That this does not represent any permanent limitation in Rossetti is plain enough from his various pictures of Beatrice, and from his verses on *Dante at Verona*.

I only throw out this idea, there are endless cases to consider. There is that of Dante himself; his intensity of of feeling measures itself against his power to grasp it and hold it away, and his consummate style is the expression of the balance attained. There is Chaucer; over *Troilus and Criseyde* there hovers the spirit of humour, although the siege of Troy, the world without, are faint and decorative, and the lovers real, and Pandarus is real. Disconcerted

romance is a difficult thing to deal with. The nineteenth-century poets do not burden themselves with it much; they are usually grave. I would not apply the trait I have described—the temper of self-abandonment—to mediaeval romancers at large; rather, it is just what the modern romancers have introduced. One could accumulate, not proofs, but instances that seem to tell. They tell equally in Rossetti's valediction to his Rose Mary:

> Thee, true soul, shall thy truth prefer
> To blessed Mary's love-bower:
> Warmed and lit is thy place afar
> With guerdon-fires of the sweet Love-star
> Where hearts of steadfast lovers are:

and in Morris:

> all for this,
> To part at last without a kiss
> Beside the haystack in the floods:

and in *Laus Veneris:*

> Inside the Horsel here the air is hot
> Right little peace one hath for it, God wot;
> The scented dusty daylight burns the air,
> And my heart chokes me till I hear it not.

The examples come from love-poetry; others could be brought from the poetry of glamour, or that of combat. But these traits are by no means marked in the first programme or doings of the 'Pre-Raphaelite' band, who only announce 'an entire adherence to the simplicity of nature'; but in the event they became marked. They connect themselves naturally with a feature seen in unequal degrees in the verse and painting of the group. The artists, in their art, tend to keep away from the real world of things without, from the actual currents of history and society around them. Their dreams are the city of refuge in which they forget the war beyond. To the passions and troubles of the beings in these dreams they give themselves, in much of their best

production. Even the time and place need not be actual; when and where did Pharamond live? The paintings of Burne-Jones are often an extreme and beautiful instance of this datelessness. The same artists, moreover, often fail to escape into, or to recognize, any sphere of thought, any larger independent order, the perception of which would set the tragedy in its place. This surely is of the essence of unadulterated romance. The permanent world of things, the permanent world of thought, are as though they were not, for the time.

Yet in none of the poets is such a severance complete. Each of them came back out of romance, as thus understood, in his own way. Rossetti had no special philosophy; yet he came back into the permanent world of poetic thought, he brought it under his art. His sonnets constantly muse on the Last Things, on Time, and Death, and Conscience. Because of his outlook upon them, in him alone of his company has Love, as a theme, the quality of intellectual grandeur; true metaphysical poetry results, as with Meredith, as with Shakespeare. But he also came back to the world about him more than once. His early *Burden of Nineveh*, his *Jenny*, his picture *Found*, like Holman Hunt's picture *The Awakening Conscience*, have a genuine reference to actual life. The sonnet *On Refusal of Aid between Nations*, written in 1848, is valid permanently on all such occasions. Morris, too, came back to this world, by the long path so well traced in his biography, to the real present, to the past as he dreamed it really was, to the future as he dreamed it might be. In *A Dream of John Ball* he blended the two strains in a faultless way. His prophetic vision is felt through all his romancing, at least as far back as *Love is Enough* (1873), at first sight the remotest of his works. And Swinburne came back through his transcendental love for freedom, for France, for Italy, and for Mazzini. Thus these writers are on record as having taken a real share in the mental history of the nation—each

of them is, like the hero of *Maud* when he went forth to war, 'one with his kind'; and this not merely by a loyalty to pure art, practised in the isolation of the 'ivory tower,' and by upholding it against the distractions of Philistinism, but through an actual and passionate, however momentary, contact of their mind with events. And yet romancers, in the long run, they remained; true to themselves, as *The Tale of Balen* and *The Sundering Flood* show. They altered the mediaeval temper; they were not bound down to it; there was much in it, like the irony of a writer like Jean de Meung, that they never appropriated; but it never left them for good and all.

V

I CONFESS, lastly, that some pictures have helped me to form this notion of the romancers' frame of mind. Charles Lamb said of Hogarth, 'his prints we read'; and, being no art critic, I try merely to read the pictures—often only reproductions. This is clearly one thing which the artists were not unwilling should be done. Look at the faces, the gestures, the emphasis, in the designs of Cruelty and Amorous Desire drawn by Burne-Jones from Spenser's Masque of Cupid; in Rossetti's *Sir Galahad at the Shrine*, or in his *Tristram and Iseult;* or even in Hunt's *Flight of Madeline and Porphyro;* is not the absorbed, the self-abandoning, the world-repelling temper such as has been here indicated? Yet this is only one of the points suggested by the tangled interplay between the poetry and the painting of sixty years ago. I will only note some of the facts and problems. There is matter for a chapter in the history of the English imagination, only to be written by some one versed both in fine art and in letters.

The give-and-take between the two arts varies curiously. The four elements to consider are the mediaeval stories, like Malory's; the poetry of the earlier romancers, from Chatterton to Tennyson; the pictures and designs produced

by the so-called Pre-Raphaelites and by those in any connexion or affinity with them; and lastly, our romancers and their inventions. Many things may happen. The final fruit may be mediaeval at two removes. It may be a picture on a scene in Keats which Keats got from Boccaccio. It may be a poem, such as Morris's *King Arthur's Tomb*, well called by his friend F. G. Stephens a 'fiery-hearted poem,' inspired by a picture of Rossetti's, itself inspired though not actually suggested by Malory. Or it may be a picture made upon a poem of the age preceding, and yet not quite upon it, like the illustration in the 'Moxon' Tennyson of St Cecily, which is said to have puzzled Tennyson because the angel was not doing what he supposed. Or it may be a true counterpart of such a poem, like Millais's drawing of Coleridge's *Genevieve*. Or a poem and a picture may spring up together from the same hand, and no one can say which is first. A little-known and beautiful instance is the etching by James Collinson, in *The Germ*, of the *Child Jesus*, attended by verses called *A Record of the Five Sorrowful Mysteries;* the child is being crowned with hawthorn by his companions, and the verses show 'an entire adherence to the simplicity of nature.' Rossetti made sonnets first on the Old Masters and afterwards on, or for, his own paintings. Once, in *The Blessed Damozel*, he made a picture on the poem that he had been retouching for many years. To work out such relationships, and embark on the question what verbal picturing really can and cannot do, would be to attempt a fresh *Laocoon* in the light of modern examples. It would be attractive to ask to what stage in a story, to what stanza, perhaps, in a poem, the moment chosen by the painter may correspond; to the most impassioned or critical moment, which shuts out past and future, as in Rossetti's picture of Paolo and Francesca and the fallen book? or to an earlier moment than that, one which leaves the imagination still reaching forward, like the design by Rossetti of *Sir Launcelot Escaping?* or to a moment, as in *The Blessed Damozel*, where the imag-

ination has no future but is carried back to the earthly past? Again, another chapter would discuss the use of symbolic detail, usually crowded and emphasized both in poetry and painting, and speaking in both cases to the colour-sense; such as the flashing of the 'great eyes of her rings' in Rossetti's poem of *The Card-Dealer*, who is Life or Death as we may interpret; or the emblematic calf in his picture *Found*. But, not to embark on this, let us remember that though the mediaeval and cognate tales are for the moment out of fashion, they have not been exhausted, and they await future artists and poets for their re-creation. The storehouse of Warton and his band contains legends which will always come up again, like the more famous ones of classical antiquity. One of the romancers, writing on the history of Locrine, overpities, it may be, such tales and their fortunes, which have not been so ill; but his cry is a noble one nevertheless:

> No part have these wan legends in the sun
> Whose glory lightened Greece and gleamed on Rome.
> Their elders live; but these, their day is done.
> Their records, written of the wind on foam,
> Fly down the wind, and darkness takes them home....
> Yet Milton's sacred feet have lingered there,
> His lips have made august the fabulous air,
> His hands have touched and left the wild weeds fair.

The closing words are true of the writer himself, the last survivor, Swinburne; and they are true of the other romancers who flourished after 1850, and who have touched these fables.

The Entente in Literature

IT is agreeable to plan out, in however hasty a way, a book that should be written by another hand. One such work would describe the debt, as it appears in literature, of the English spirit to the French. The hour for such an acknowledgment is the most auspicious in our history. Nor is there any need to praise amiss, or uncritically, for the strictest inquiry only justifies our gratitude. Already there are valuable surveys of special periods, and many theses on detail. But the whole of our present knowledge has yet to be utilized by a single mind. And the first need, the bedrock for the investigator, would be a due bibliography, made by a small expert syndicate. The following would be only a part of its contents: (*a*) A list of translations, adaptations, imitations, and 'vulgarizations' (unhappily a large item) from the French, classified under literary species—lyric, drama, history, philosophy, fiction, and the like. (*b*) 'Allusion-books,' applied to chosen writers, on the model of Dr Paget Toynbee's *Dante in English Literature*. (*c*) Writings on French literature by English critics and historians. (*d*) A note on English authors like Gower, Gibbon, Beckford, and Swinburne, who have tried to write in French. The debt of France to England, the counter-payment, could be shown in a similar bibliography; but it would be a smaller one. Here, indeed, is the root of the matter. History, and not simple amity, proclaims that if we have given much to France, France has given us much more. But a bibliography is only a guide. The book of which I dream would deal not only with tangible facts but with the X-rays, the play of art and intellect. How would such a book be laid out? Into what great epochs would it fall? At what notable periods would the French influence, though never extinct, be found slight in comparison?

The history of Middle English literature after the Con-

[1] Reprinted, with some additions, from *The French Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 1, January 1919.

quest might be written in terms not of dates or literary kinds but of the various forces that fertilized the native genius from without. The shorter chapters would treat of the forces that were *not* French in origin; and, of course, chiefly of Latin. The *De Consolatione* of Boethius, the Latin sermons, saints' lives, hymns, satires, and histories (not least Geoffrey of Monmouth's) would be reviewed in this aspect. But the longer chapters would be devoted to the effects of French. Their headings are familiar: the immense, though tardy enrichment of the language by French words; the immigration of the 'matter of France,' in the various shapes of romance, short-lined, alliterative, or Chaucerian; the appearance of English lyric in Northern French measures, and sometimes in lines alternately French and English; the thronging-in of moulds and forms—*débat*, rondeau, ballade, 'complaint,' and so following; the traces of the omnipresent *Roman de la Rose*, and the shifting shapes and themes of allegory. It all suggests two general reflections. First, our poetry, from Layamon to the death of Chaucer, though of high interest to ourselves, and not small in volume, is after all (if we leave out part of Chaucer, and Langland, and part of Gower, and a little besides) very much in the nature of an overflow from the richer and fuller tide of French thirteenth-century production. Secondly, if England, as usual, is late in the field, she shows a certain power of catching up; and when she produces Chaucer at last, she in truth does more than that. It is long before France has herself such an artist to show. Yet where would Chaucer have been without French teaching, direct and indirect? And if we are to choose among our debts to our neighbours during those centuries, which of them are the greatest? I think that they are to be found, not in the feeling and temper of chivalry, though that is precious; nor in particular stories or cycles; nor in special forms, like the ballade; but in style and versification at large. Chaucer (to go no further) took the average, accomplished style, the

'common form' of his models, with their sweetness, naturalness, and continuous flow, and showed that English could appropriate those qualities. He also took one of their measures, the long line of ten, and showed that, with some suppling and varying (learnt from Italian) it could be used in our emphatically stressed tongue. This became the standard line of serious English poetry: and no more need be said. After his death its music and very structure came to be generally forgotten, and had to be learnt again from Italy in the time of Henry the Eighth. But it had first been learnt from France, like the basis of our prosody generally. This, and the acquirement of an adequate style, a style that would wear, were greater because more enduring gifts than any stories however good, or than any sentiment however gracious. I have not named the scholars, native and foreign, who have made these truths a commonplace: but the work of M. J. J. Jusserand,[1] who was early in the field, has not been superseded.

The period from the death of Chaucer to the appearance of Caxton was, it is known, a time less of flowering than of sowing in English literature; there is no British Villon, though there are *The Nut-Browne Mayde*, and Henryson, and Dunbar. And while the old patterns of French allegory and romance continue to tell, there is not much new French influence. With the printing-press all is changed; even apart from Malory, many of Caxton's best books are translations, from the *Recuyell* onwards. Thus began the flood: but it was Malory who first learned from his 'French book,' or books,

[1] *Histoire littéraire du peuple anglais*, two vols. (Paris, 1894, 1904). See also G. Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. i (London, 1906), *Flourishing of Romance, etc.* (Edinburgh, 1897), and other works; W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance* (London, 1897), and *Essays on Mediæval Literature* (London, 1905), includes papers on Chaucer, Gower, Froissart; W. H. Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer* (London, 1906) containing valuable bibliography.

and who showed that our prose could move in a clear and beautiful stream of narrative. This Chaucer had not done, and prose had waited long. The lesson, however, was lost or obscured; the English Renaissance was distracted by other models, and prose had to fetch many a weary circuit before it came back to simplicity.

The next great phase has been carefully described by French as well as by English and American pens.[1] The French Renaissance told most powerfully in England between 1579 and about 1625; but there was a long prelude and a shorter epilogue. The works of Dr Charlanne, Dr Upham, and Sir Sidney Lee cover between them the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Within this long span there is a period of ebb in the French influence, though it never vanishes: this ebb occurs between about 1625 and 1660, a date that marks a new departure. Sir Sidney Lee's book is concerned chiefly with the sixteenth century; it has added very greatly to our knowledge, and it is not a book of one idea—which is as bad a thing as a man of one idea; for the Italian, classical, and other currents in our literature are duly indicated. It also allows, though I think not by any means fully, for the transforming power of the native genius. But it is now clear that much good Elizabethan verse, especially lyric verse, which was always thought to be original, is either translation from the French or one degree removed from it.[2] It is none the worse poetry for that.

[1] Louis Charlanne, *L'influence française en Angleterre au XVIIe siècle*, Paris, 1906; A. H. Upham, *The French Influence in English Literature from the Accession of Queen Elizabeth to the Restoration*, New York (Columbia University), 1908; Sir Sidney Lee, *The French Renaissance in England*, Oxford, 1910. There are numberless dissertations on points of detail concerning all periods; see L.-P. Betz, *La littérature comparée, essai bibliographique* (Strasbourg, 1900), pp. 29-31, 34-38, and many have appeared since.

[2] The various enquiries of Professor Léon Kastner of Manchester, printed from 1907 onwards in the *Modern Language Review*, make in the same direction.

Here again, as in the fourteenth century, France is the music-master who often teaches the tunes themselves as well as the control of the instrument. The great fact, in this department, is the joint operation of France and Italy; and it is often the operation of Italy through the medium of France. Italy, as M. Charlanne remarks, kept the 'hegemony'; but in the sonnet, for example, her influence was largely at second-hand. Again, with all honour to Ronsard and his companions and successors, it may be held that England, in the end, equalled or bettered their teaching. Indeed, the strange thing is how much a poet like Spenser could learn from a poet like Desportes. Sir Sidney's earlier chapters, on the prelude from 1500 to 1550, break much fresh ground, and his pages on Calvin, Amyot, Rabelais, and Montaigne, and their reception in England, seem to garner every particle of information. The same may be said of his account of the Huguenot influence on letters; a very long-lived affair, lasting beyond his chosen dates into Revolution times.

And yet, when all is said, the French, the Italian, the classic influences are only frequently recurring strands, and not on the whole dominant, in the big, iridescent pattern of English Renaissance literature. For one thing, an 'influence' hardly does its full work until it has become invisible—until the graft has borne fruit which is not that of its own tree. French literature, besides being deeply original, is marked throughout by its *radiative* power. English literature, also deeply original, is marked throughout by its *reactive* power. This reactive power, however, is least visible during the last great phase, or sequel, of the Renaissance proper; that is, after 1660.

I pass over the gap between; not that France ceases to do her part during it, but because the most characteristic writing in England, namely that of the later drama, of the 'fantastic' poets, and of the great prose writers, is perhaps the most independent of foreign sources in all our chronicle. And this writing, doubtless, in prose as in verse, is marked

by the reign of caprice, or at least of fierce individuality, uncurbed by the ideals of lucidity and sociability in prose; also of rightness and keeping and finish in verse. There is one great exception, Milton, and one delightful one, Herrick; but these poets are, as we say, kept straight, not by French but by classic models. So, probably, is the prose of Cowley. Indeed, during the whole period from the death of James the First to the accession of Charles the Second, Greece and Rome counted for more to us than all the modern nations put together. I say this without prejudice to the phenomena well described by Dr Upham and M. Charlanne: the French strain in the court of Charles the First, the rage for the prose romances, the infection of the *précieuses;* but such results are, after all, not first-rate. They are most instructive in the light of the age that follows.

We have long ceased to exaggerate, in the old fashion, the sway of French literature on Restoration England. Still, it is there, and it enters like some strange colouring-matter into the very sap of our verse and prose. In fiction, in comedy, in tragedy, in criticism, in *pensée;* in burlesque verse, in light verse, in heroic verse, in theology, it is seen in sundry degrees and shades. Too often, as in the drama, the imported literature is marred and degraded by the borrowers. On the other hand, the great and distinctive achievements, such as the rhymed satire and the criticism of Dryden, though not untouched by French example, are profoundly independent. It is an error to make too much of Boileau in this connexion, though he helped to school the youthful Pope. Works like *Hudibras* at one extreme and *The Pilgrim's Progress* at the other are almost wholly of the soil.

Our bibliography would bring out in a startling way the extent of the industry of translation, to and fro, between 1660 and 1745. The rise of French on the ruins of Latin, as the *lingua franca;* the hive of of refugee presses in England and the Low Countries; the tendency to circulate a common

currency of thought, especially in the matter of liberal theology; all this points to a levelling of national barriers which even the fratricidal wars could not interrupt. But our true debt to France is to be found, not in the adoption of her forms or speculative ideas, but in the spread of a certain temper—the temper of reason, mundane reason; and also in a certain tone, the tone of urbanity and humanity. Literature came off its stilts, it became social, though not always amiable; it spoke as man speaks to man, not in the tones of the declaimer, the recluse, or the 'humourist.' The expression of this spirit is found in the essay, the tract, the 'character' (itself of older date, but now changed in spirit), and the *pensée*. Behind our best 'Queen Anne prose' lies the *grand siècle*, as one great formative influence.

As the century wore on the debt took a different shape. It became intellectual, and it became reciprocal. Here England led in point of date.[1] But in the later age of the *philosophes* there was more than full repayment. The central figures, Hume and Gibbon, mark the negative pole in thought; their personal relationship with France is well known, and many followed them. They are both (in Gibbon's case perhaps consciously) spiritual children of Bayle, whose full influence in this country has yet to be worked out. And though Hume knew and helped Rousseau, both Hume and Gibbon are pre-Rousseau in spirit. They are of their time—sometimes we exclaim that they *are* their time—but he heralds a new time. The late M. Joseph Texte,[2] who handled 'comparative literature'—a theme that now has a big literature of its own—with a tact that makes great demands on us all, was the first to make fully evident the

[1] The beginnings are well shown in J. Churton Collins's *Bolingbroke and Voltaire in England* (London, 1886).

[2] *J.-J. Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire* (Paris, 1895); English translation by J. W. Matthews (London, 1899). The volumes of the *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* contain many articles on kindred topics.

effect of Rousseau on the English mind. But this effect again, was largely post-dated, for it was greatest after the Revolution. Long before, the novels first of Richardson and then of Sterne had struck, as all know, deep root in France. The whole story of that delicate plant, 'sensibility,' is here involved. Earlier still, the landscapes of Thomson had inspired imitation overseas.

After 1789 a new, complex chapter opens. Two currents cross and blend: one, the sceptical, destructive, and negative; the other, the hopeful, reconstructive, and prophetic. Both are seen in writers like Godwin and Paine. I suspect, though I cannot prove, that the optimism and grandiose forecast of Condorcet counted for more with our enthusiasts than has always been supposed. In any case, the hopes and simplifying dreams which Rousseau had been the first, with so much passion and style, to utter, wrought powerfully upon our poets. But often they wrought upon Wordsworth,[1] and upon Shelley afterwards, at the second remove, through the singular Godwin, the cool transmitter of hot thoughts. The pure revolutionary feeling had been expressed earlier by William Blake, and in a qualified and variable way by Robert Burns. But the next great phenomenon is the reaction against that feeling: the influence of France, as it were, defeating itself for a while, during the bad times of the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. The history of this reaction, which begins with Burke, and is felt until the middle, at least, of the nineteenth century, is of first-rate interest, and still awaits its regular historian.[2]

[1] E. Legouis, *La jeunesse de Wordsworth*, 1770-98 (Paris, 1896); English translation by J. W. Matthews, 1897.

[2] See E. Dowden's suggestive essays, *The French Revolution and English Literature* (London, 1897); and a noticeable summary by G. P. Gooch in the *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. VIII, chap. XXV. (Cambridge, 1904). The fullest account, as regards verse, is by Charles Cestre, *La révolution française et les poètes anglais*, 1789-1809 (Paris, 1906).

Our romantic movement had, of course, its violent streak of revolutionary colouring. Byron, Shelley, and lesser liberals like Leigh Hunt grew up too late to recoil from the Terror, and soon enough to detest the Holy Alliance; and they were all champions of the popular cause. But the romantic movement, as a whole, went its own way, wavering, so far as it touched affairs at all, between revulsion and radicalism, but mainly concerned with pure art—fiction, ballad, *diablerie*, the mystical, and the interpretation of nature. In comparison it owed little to any contemporary literature, though the German and Italian strains are evident; it owed, in any case, little to contemporary France. The manifestation of 1830 did not touch us closely till long afterwards. The period from 1820 to 1850 is, in this sense, something of a blank in our story. On the last phase I will only touch briefly.

From 1850 to 1900 (where it is well to stop) the influence of French on English writers has never been predominant, and never wanting. It appears chiefly in three shapes; I omit such minor examples as the dealings of Thackeray with the French novel. First, the spell of Old French, of romance, is felt by our poetic mediævalizers, especially by the group so ill-named 'Pre-Raphaelite.' Even the Italian Rossetti was interested; and he also made the most perfect version in our language of any poem by Villon. Arthur O'Shaughnessy expanded, and at times warped, stories of Marie de France in verse of haunting melody. In William Morris the enthusiasm was much stronger; he nourished himself not a little on Old French, borrowed from its tales, learnt some of their limpid flow, and liked to reprint them at his Kelmscott Press. Morris, be it added, inherited from Ruskin his passion for Gothic, especially French Gothic; and Ruskin himself, in his *Bible of Amiens* and elsewhere, is a born interpreter of the Gothic spirit. Swinburne added to the versions of Villon, and wrote his ballad on his 'sad, bad, mad, glad brother.' But secondly, Swinburne was enamoured of contemporary French poetry. He worshipped Hugo in

prose and rhyme; his noblest elegy is on Baudelaire (inspired by a false rumour of his death); he wrote another upon Gautier, and appreciated Vacquerie, and made French verse of his own. But I think it was after 1880, during the alleged phase of 'decadence,' that *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* became widely known in England.

Thirdly, the critics, above all Sainte-Beuve, but also Taine in some degree, left their print on the English mind. Sainte-Beuve was in debt to Wordsworth and others of our poets, and threw his rays, as an interpreter, on many an English author. Taine's great work still has power to kindle and enlighten the British reader, although frankly, it often makes him rub his eyes in amazement and feel as if he were standing on his head. The dealings of Matthew Arnold with French authors would be a subject for a small thesis. He was for ever preaching, and quite often practised, the Gallic virtues of urbanity, measure, and disinterestedness; though he remained to the last, what with his whims and his love of lecturing, a very British specimen of a French critic. Still he is one of our best, and his place is safe; and he justly owns his debt to Sainte-Beuve, 'the master of us all in criticism.' A deeper, more intimate method was disclosed by Walter Pater, who continually shows his feeling for the spirit of France, though no French writer is his model in point of style. From his early articles on *Amis and Amile* and Joachim du Bellay, down to his presentment (the best I know in English) of Montaigne, in *Gaston de Latour*, and to his review of Feuillet, Pater, who draws on many sources of inspiration—Greek, Italian, and English—constantly returns to France. As the nineteenth century draws to an end, we trace a growth of eager interest, a desire to acclimatize and interpret the genius of her writers. The war has strengthened that impulse. The work of Professor George Saintsbury, now of some forty years standing, speaks for itself. His *Short History of French Literature* (1882) was one of the first, his *History of the French Novel* (1917-19) is the

latest and it is to be hoped not the last fruit of his learning in this field. Amongst Englishmen of his generation, Mr Saintsbury, writing (as he somewhere says) 'with a constantly critical intent,' leaves a commentary upon the French genius that is not excelled in its union of range with flexible sympathy. For Mr Edmund Gosse, too, we may fairly claim that, in the words used by Sainte-Beuve about Matthew Arnold, he has entered into that genius by *une profonde ligne intérieure;* dealing of late, in his admirable *causeries*, more especially with its recent manifestations. It would be agreeable to recount other scholars, like Mr Francis Yvon Eccles, whose *Century of French Poets* (1909)—the 'century' is the nineteenth—is of great service to English readers, and perhaps not to them alone. But I fear to begin, because it is needful to omit; and the difficulty increases if we try to describe the ample return made by the French scholars, beginning with E. Beljame, the poet and critic Angellier, and James Darmesteter, who have thrown light on English literature. Amongst the living, MM. Cazamian, Cestre, Huchon, Legouis, Maigron, Morel, Wolff, are among the foremost of these scholars; I do not try to distinguish their labours, or to complete the list; they are still contributing to this rich interchange of ideas. It is not to be thought of that the next twenty years should impair such an intellectual fraternity. As in the case of a lucky marriage, the way lies through endless surprises and misunderstandings to a clearer judgment and a firmer bond.

Madame de Maintenon and Women's Education[1]

I

MME DE MAINTENON, being one day in the 'green' class, consisting of girls about twelve years old, asked them what they would like her to talk about, and the subject of *gratitude* was proposed. 'What,' she asked one of them, 'is gratitude?' 'It is doing all you can to please the people who have done you good.' 'Not only that,' was the reply; 'it is remembering the good that they have done you, and showing at the right time that you remember it. What then is ingratitude?' 'The opposite.' 'Yes; it is forgetting benefits you have received. Do you know to whom you ought to feel grateful? In the first place to God, in the second to your benefactors. For instance, ought you to feel grateful for the teaching I am giving you at this moment?' The child was embarrassed; she felt highly grateful to Mme de Maintenon, but felt that she ought to be still more so to God; she did not know what to say. 'Have no doubts,' said Mme de Maintenon, 'you owe your first thanks to God. It is He that has allowed me to come here rather than go somewhere else, it is He that inspires me to talk to you, and it is He that makes people say right and proper things to you (des choses convenables).'

Then she asked another whether she could feel grateful to a person she did not like. 'It is hard,' was the reply, 'but

[1] Reprinted with many changes from an address given to and printed by the Manchester Teachers' Guild in 1900. For the material, see the authoritative study by Octave Gréard, *Mme de Maintenon: Extraits de ses Lettres, Avis*, etc. (Paris, fourth ed. 1886). Also E. Faguet, *Mme de Maintenon, Institutrice*, Paris, 1887. Her educational works were printed more than half a century ago by Théophile Lavallée (*Lettres et Entretiens sur l'Education des Filles*, 2 vols; and *Conseils aux Demoiselles qui entrent au Monde*, 2 vols, etc.)

one must put constraint on oneself.' 'Yes; we must put down to God all the good that is done to us; but that must not be made a poor excuse for being ungrateful to the persons whom God has employed to do us that good. It is very poor reasoning to say that because I ought to thank God, I ought not to thank His creatures. There are bad-hearted people, who would like to be under no obligation to anybody. I knew,' said Mme de Maintenon, drawing on her formidable experience, 'a woman who said, "*I wish so-and-so were dead*, for here am I, bound to feel obliged to him all my days."'

Then she asked if there were no ungrateful girls in the class, and they all said *no*. Then she said, 'Let the ungrateful ones stand up!' No one moved; and this led her to add that ingratitude is a fault that is unwillingly confessed, because it is low and mean, and shows a very bad heart; everyone disclaims it; 'but,' added the uncrowned wife of Louis XIV, 'it is very common. There are other faults that are admitted more readily. I am sure that if I were to ask for the lazy girls, some would stand up, for idleness is a fault that somebody here must feel guilty of.' She turned to the first mistress, and said, 'Console yourself, ma sœur, you have not a single ungrateful girl in your class.' She then set forth the great benefits for which they ought to be thankful, and assured herself from the lips of the first mistress that they all loved each other like sisters, and lived together in unity, 'after the fashion commanded to the apostles, and wished by St Paul to the Christians to whom he wrote.' The aim of such lessons, as we learn elsewhere, was, 'leur former tout doucement les sentiments du cœur par beaucoup de mépris pour la lâcheté et pour la bassesse'; or, again, 'to teach them all the delicacies of honour, probity, discretion, generous feeling, and humanity.' And again: 'We try to make them frank, simple, generous, sans finesse, sans mystère, and without respect of persons.' Locke or Milton will hardly go beyond that.

II

THIS was in 1704, when the speaker was an old woman; and the little girls had some reason for gratitude. The scene was the school of Saint-Cyr, now the great military academy, near the king's old park at Versailles. It had existed some eighteen years, and had been in a manner, as Sainte-Beuve says, the 'wedding present of the king' to Mme de Maintenon, whom he had married privately about 1684. The war and the taxes had impoverished the nobles and gentry, and the daughters of those classes, the future wives and mothers of the flower of France, were among the first to suffer. They were in danger of falling back for their education on the famine diet of the convent, and of going forth into life without a dowry. Saint-Cyr was designed to prevent this danger. The school finally contained 250 girls of good station and insufficient means, who were 'to enter before ten years of age, and be kept till they were twenty; they were to be fully educated, and made capable of teaching others; they were to be freely taught, boarded, and maintained in every way until that age, and then to receive a portion.' A full account of the life and constitution of the place can be seen in the pages of M. Gréard. There was an elaborate division of labour among the staff, the 'Dames de Saint-Cyr,' who were under strict and exclusive vows of devotion to their work. The girls were divided into four classes, according to age, and each class was denoted by a coloured ribbon, and divided into smaller sections or 'bands.' The 'Blues,' or highest class, ranged from seventeen to twenty years of age. The 'Yellows,' from fourteen to sixteen, were the most difficult to manage. Ten was the limit of age between the 'Greens' and the lowest class of 'Reds.' There was a sort of prefectorial system, the very elect being adorned with a black ribbon or other uniform. No distinctions of rank or wealth were recognized, and nominations rested solely with the king.

What first of all strikes us, with our modern notions,

in Saint-Cyr, is the handsome share of positive ignorance that is required from the finished product of the institution. It would be hard to say what 'standard' the attainments represent. No one is to read too many books; it is dangerous. The 'Reds' had a groundwork of reading, writing, grammar, and reckoning of a simple kind. The 'Greens' added some music, and were allowed economical doses of 'history, geography, and *mythology*.' The 'Yellows' had some drawing and dancing, and more music and more French. But instruction, in our sense of the term, virtually stopped at seventeen; for the 'Blues,' though they had further exercise in language and expression, otherwise gave themselves up to two things:—work with the hands and moral education. The foundress had severe notions about learned women; 'Les femmes ne savent jamais qu'à demi, et le peu qu'elles savent les rend communément fières, dédaigneuses, causeuses, et dégoûtées des choses solides.' Of course the catechism and religious instruction were taken throughout the school, and Saint-Cyr had its confessors and its clerical directors and patrons. But though a religious foundation, it was to some extent the fruit of a secular protest. It rested, like the modern public school, on the frank confession that the world was the scene of life awaiting most of its pupils. Even its programme of instruction was a great advance in an age when most women knew very little, though a few knew a good deal. Some of the same spirit of cautious change can be seen in Fénelon's work *Sur l' Education des Filles* (1687). In some points Fénelon goes beyond Mme de Maintenon, if in balance and discretion he comes short of her. He and his book exercised much influence on her conception of training. It is good to find an Archbishop of the Old Faith in the seventeenth century warmly recommending the use of a Greek dress to women; 'hair knotted carelessly behind, and full floating draperies with long folds, both majestic and pleasing.' This is the strain of a man who has read Plato and has a sense for beauty, the strain which fills the *Télémaque*,—

that work of which the charm is carefully hidden from us in our youth. Of mere instruction, however, Fénelon is chary. It is true that he sensibly advises women to have an elementary knowledge of law, the nature of a will, the difference between real and personal property, and the like; I do not know how often this is taught in our High Schools. But he does not really ask for much more than reading, writing and the four rules. He makes a reluctant concession to ancient and even to French history, but not to the Italian or Spanish tongues. Those literatures, says Fénelon, are too eloquent for young people. Girls, he adds, may learn Latin, because it is the language of the Church, and therefore also of reason. But of Latin, or of science, or of examinations, there seems to be no trace at Saint-Cyr.

But if there was not much learning, there was plenty of education of a peculiar stamp. Saint-Cyr passed through several phases. The first five years were the period of 'agrément,' of literature, of engrossment with the brilliancy and nicety of words. There was much reciting and criticizing, and 'conversing' about poetry and letters. The girls played Racine's *Andromaque*, that impassioned tragedy, 'so well,' says M. Gréard, 'that it was decided they should play it no more.' In amends, Racine wrote *Esther* expressly for Saint-Cyr; it is full of piety, music, and royalist sentiment. Later still was acted his *Athalie*, but this produced a crisis. Mme de Maintenon found that the excited heads of the girls were being infected by the 'spirit of curiosity' and by 'bel esprit,' which found its way even into their religion. A period of sobriety and drab reaction followed. No more fashionable audiences, no more performances. 'We must renounce our love of superfine wit and our excess of freedom in talk'; all this takes a young lady away from the humility, the practicality, the simplicity that she must aim at; it tends 'enfler les cœurs,' or, as we say, it produces swelled heads. So in 1692 the institution was given a more monastic character, and the element of amenity or 'agrément' was held in

suspicion. But this revulsion, in turn, tamed itself down, and much amenity remained. 'I do not know any place,' said Mme de Maintenon, 'where the education is gayer than ours, or the young people amuse themselves more.' And her counsels were: 'Ne soyez point sévères, ayez notre Seigneur pour modèle'; and 'Soyez gaies et non pas évaporées.' The last was a copy-book heading; some art in composing such things was expected at Saint-Cyr. Reason, the animating principle of that age,—reason itself, said the same speaker, requires the diversion of the young; reason is amiable, it is not to be always bristling, critical or severe; 'it is unreasonable to be always reasoning.'

III

THIS institution was planned, then, as a training-ground for life and the great world, not as a mill for certificates. The foundress cared little for what are now called 'results.' Her device was, 'Many maxims and not much Latin.' In earlier days, when she shepherded the young Duc de Maine, the son of Mme de Montespan, it happened once that the Latin tutor failed to appear; and Mme de Maintenon is said to have cheerfully exclaimed, 'Victory, victory! we have gained a day.' The training at Saint-Cyr culminated, as I have said, in moral education and in manual labour. Among the arts taught were scrubbing, washing, nursing, cooking, needlework, and domestic medicine. The care paid in modern schools to bodily health and efficiency was strikingly anticipated. One counsel of Mme de Maintenon evaporates in translation: 'N'épargnez rien pour leur âme, ni pour leur taille.' We also notice with relief the frankness with which the girls were talked to, and were taught to talk, about marriage. Mme de Maintenon, with a mixture of tact and sanity that can only be praised, made endless war upon the mistresses who slurred over this point in the catechism, and upon the shy pupils who were afraid

to name the subject. It is best in this case for the critic to retire in favour of another, and even a long, quotation.

'Cette fausse délicatesse est un des travers que je voudrais ne pas voir chez vous, mes chères filles; la plupart des religieuses n'osent prononcer le nom de mariage; saint Paul n'avait pas cette sorte de scrupule, car il en parle très ouvertement. . . . C'est un travers qui est insoutenable dans une maison comme la vôtre, de n'oser y parler d'un état que plusieurs de vos demoiselles embrasseront, qui est approuvé par l'Eglise, et que Jésus-Christ même a honoré de sa présence. Comment les rendrez-vous capable de bien remplir les devoirs des divers états où Dieu les peut appeler, si vous ne leur en parlez jamais, et, qui pis est, si vous leur laissez entrevoir la peine que vouz avez à en parler? . . . Craignez que les omissions qu'elles feront par ignorance des devoirs de cet état ne retombent sur vous qui aurez manqué de les en instruire.

— Ayez la bonté, Madame, dit encore Mme de Jas, de nous faire un petit détail de ce qu'il nous convient de leur dire à cet sujet. — Vous ne sauriez trop leur prêcher, reprit Mme de Maintenon, l'édification qu'elles doivent à leur mari, le support, l'attachement à sa personne et à tout ses intérêts, tout le service et les soins qui dépendent d'elles, surtout le zèle sincère et discret pour son salut dont tant de femmes vertueuses leur ont donné l'exemple, aussi bien que celui de la patience; le soin de l'éducation des enfants qui s'étend bien loin, celui des domestiques et du ménage, qui sont plus indispensables aux mères de famille que les prières de surérogation que quantité d'entre elles ont coutume de faire, au préjudice de ces premiers et plus importants devoirs de leur état. Quand vous parlerez du mariage à vos demoiselles de cette manière-là, elles n'y trouveront pas de quoi rire, rien n'étant plus sérieux qu'un pareil engagement; étab-

lissez donc chez vous de leur parler sur cette matière quand elle se présente comme toutes les autres qui leur conviennent, et ne souffrez pas que, sous prétexte de modestie et de perfection, on n'ose y nommer le nom de mariage. Cette sotte affectation, si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi, vous rejetterait bien bas dans toutes les petitesses que j'ai tâché de vous faire éviter avec tant de soin.'

Nothing, perhaps, can be better than this, with a few reservations. We need neither blame nor extenuate the advice to these ladies to convert their future husbands; it was given by a woman who had reclaimed the most difficult potentate in Christendom. If the benevolence is oppressive, it would be too much to expect anything else under the rule of the great king. But the taint of submissiveness clings to the teaching at Saint-Cyr—submissiveness not merely of the will to discipline, but of the mind and judgment to a code. Doubtless the tone of the convents was far more abject; still there is altogether too much tutoring and governessing for our taste. The estate of marriage is to be only an exchange of slavery for the woman, and Mme de Maintenon is explicit on this point. The first great thing is to 'break the will.'

'Je ne puis trop vous exhorter, mes chères enfants, à vous accoutumer à rompre votre volonté; vous vous en trouverez bien en quelque état que vous soyez dans la suite. Si vous êtes mariées, vous ne ferez point vos volontés avec un mari, mais il faudra nécessairement faire la sienne. Si vous êtes religieuses, le vœu d'obéissance que vous ferez vous y obligera doublement. Ne vous imaginez donc point que la dépendance soit une pratique d'enfant... Les princes et les magistrats obéissent, quoique ce soit eux qui ont l'autorité en main: ils se soumettent aux lois, aux rémontrances qu'on leur fait. Le pape même n'obéit-il pas à son confesseur, en ce qui regarde sa conscience?'

The wife is thus an inferior, diverse and enslaved, not diverse and free. But there is nothing in all this that is

peculiar to the speaker, or to her century. A second comment will occur to every one on reading these clear-headed remarks. Nothing is said about love, and this omission is not merely due to the radical difference between French and the English ideas of marriage. It seems on the whole to suit the bent of the Latin races that they should look on marriage from the more positive and financial standpoint, as an arrangement. But that is not the only reason for so prosaic a treatment as Mme de Maintenon's. The first woman of France planned her school with a kind of foiled maternal instinct, or at least with the providence of a godmother raised to an enormous power. She knew from the roughest experience the lot of the undowered and unsheltered girl of gentle birth, turned out upon the world. Let us give her credit for her strong humanity, which is often ignored by those who find her cool and politic. One day some dust was knocked up in the class-room and annoyed everybody. 'Les pauvres enfants,' said the foundress, 'j'aime jusqu'à leur poussière.' And every one was touched 'by the tender way in which she said it.' She had this comprehensive affection; but it was unlikely, living in that age, and with her experience, that she should deal in romance.

IV

I SHALL not try to describe at length a career which belongs to history and has bequeathed so many disputes to the historians. Françoise d'Aubigné, born in 1635, was the granddaughter of the great Protestant satirist; was brought up in poverty and harshness; accepted the Roman faith, under pressure, while still a child; and, before she was seventeen, married Scarron, the crippled wit and playwright. He behaved well to her and introduced her to notable society, but in 1660 left her a widow and in straits. She was beautiful, and virtuous, and full of grace and gaiety. Her beauty passed, but her other qualities remained, including the supple good sense and discretion which made her fortune. It does not appear that she was ever in love. But from the first

she loved children, and they her, and she always remembered the need felt by the young for the kindness, and for the demonstrations of kindness, which she had never received herself. After a phase of retirement she emerges, launched by certain highly-placed friends, in a strange, at first a troublous occupation. She becomes governess to the illegitimate children of the king by Mme de Montespan, and shows herself a born shepherdess of difficult youth. With Mme de Montespan, as time passes, she wages a long, an obscure, and at last a triumphant war. She becomes the wife of the king, legal but unacknowledged; claiming nothing, but still the first woman in France. Already she had received the house, estate, and style of Maintenon. Her later career and behaviour are still debated: her share in the persecution of the Protestants, and in the 'reformation' of Louis XIV. Saint-Simon, her most venomous critic, who can neither be wholly trusted nor wholly refuted, has little to say against her as an educator. In any case, though she played the great game with amazing address, it wearied her. 'I am not great,' she said; '*je suis élevé*.' 'If my heart were to be seen, it would be as dry and warped as that of M. de Louvois.' But this was not true when she laboured for Saint-Cyr; for there she is herself. 'If you knew the world,' she says, 'you would hate it.' The school was her refuge from the world. No educational despot was ever less intolerable, none ever deserved power better or strained it less. 'My greatest happiness at Saint-Cyr is that they can do without me. What I do cannot amount to anything; if there is anything good in it, it must pass on to you and remain always in the house.' This is transparent and sincere; it has the stamp of that simplicity which Mme de Maintenon preaches and observes.

V

SIMPLICITY is her favourite word. It is her ideal in language, bearing, and dress; it is also close akin to the qualities of sincerity, veracity, and 'justesse.' Simplicity is the con-

ception that links these cardinal virtues to the graces which ought to be their outward expression. It counts for much in the programme of Saint-Cyr; and Mme de Maintenon's advice to her teachers is not yet obsolete. 'The essential thing is simplicity in all their conduct, rightness in their intentions (droiture), good faith in all they do.' 'Tell them always the truth in everything, making out trifles to be trifles, and important things to be important.' 'No idle tales to children; tell them things as they are; tell them nothing of which you will have to disabuse them later.' 'We must talk to a child of seven as reasonably as to a girl of twenty.' And to the girls: 'Die to the vanity and lightness of our sex!' Thus candour and straightness are the root of the matter. Mme de Maintenon strangely fancied that honesty is the hardest of virtues for her sex. She has a discourse against 'cachotterie,' or furtiveness, which shows her mind. It is a little spoilt by the inclination to treat dishonesty less as a vice in itself than as a crime against prudence, discipline, and the duty of obedience; but these are the illustrations:

> 'Be quite content that your mistresses should see all you do. In society, a bad opinion would be formed of a young girl who wished to hide things from her mother; and if a woman, when her husband came in, were to hide a book or paper, or herself, the most alarming suspicions would be conceived. The longer I live, the more I see that this spirit of furtiveness is fatal to young people. Promise me that you will always adopt a frank and open line of conduct, without disguise or circuit.—Then they all promised.'

Then she tells the teachers to lighten the burden ('leur soulager l'obéissance') by always giving reasons; a counsel which the author of the maxim, *Never explain*, would have disapproved. Another passage, full of experience, has a somewhat melancholy ring. Experience, backed by the power of style, makes the words of a teacher tell. We listen,

not to an elderly theorist, but to one who has kept her own road, who has made something even of the false relations that are forced upon her, and who, if perhaps guarded by a coldish nature from lightness, cannot be said merely to have followed the main chance.

'Je suis montée à votre classe, mes chères enfants, pour vous voir toutes et vous parler sur un mot que m'écrit une de vos compagnes qui est sortie et qui plaint de ce qu'elle ne trouve point dans le monde la droiture qu'on lui a apprise à Saint-Cyr. J'ai fait plusieurs réflexions là-dessus, et j'ai pensé à vous aussitôt et à vous dire que vous ne devez pas vous attendre à trouver partout la même droiture qu'on vous inspire ici; peu de personnes en sont capables: premièrement, parce qu'il y en a peu qui en aient naturellement; il y en a d'autres qui en auraient, mais que ne savent pas en quoi elle consiste ni comment la placer; il y en a enfin qui le savent bien, mais il leur en coûterait trop: l'intérêt les retient, car il en coûte pour être droite. Vous ne le sentez pas à présent, mais vous le sentirez un jour, quand, par exemple, vous n'aurez que deux pistoles, et qu'il faudra que vous en donniez une par droiture; vous verrez que cela n'est pas si aisé, et cependant nous n'avons point de droiture si, dès qu'il nous en coûte quelque chose, nous ne voulons pas faire ce qu'elle demande. Il n'y a rien de si rare dans le monde: on ne peut assez vous le dire. Qu'on ait un procès injuste, il y a peu de gens qui disent: il faut l'abandonner, et ils tâchent, au contraire, d'en tirer ce qu'ils peuvent, ce qui ne devrait pas être, puisqu'ils le savent mauvais; car c'est une injustice considérable de soutenir une mauvaise cause, et quand il s'agit d'une perte considérable, ou de la moitié de notre bien, cela est encore plus difficile; il faut avoir une grande vertu pour passer là-dessus. Cependant il faut y passer, faire justice à ces dépens: autrement point de salut. On n'entend guère ce

langage dans le monde, et si vous disiez dans la plupart de vos familles ce que je vous dis à présent en tout ce qu'on vous apprend à Saint-Cyr là-dessus, il y a bien des gens qui n'y comprendraient rien et qui croiraient, pour ainsi dire, que vous parlez grec. Communément chacun agit par intérêt, et l'intérêt étouffe la droiture naturelle; mais si vous êtes assez heureuses pour avoir cette droiture, il ne faut point avoir de peine à souffrir ceux qui en manquent, ni pour cela ne vouloir pas vivre avec eux; il faut, au contraire, qu'elle vous les fasse supporter patiemment dans la vue de la leur inspirer. Pour vous, tâchez, dans les occasions, de donner des marques de la vôtre et de la faire aimer: puis demeurez-en là, sans être continuellement à critiquer tous ceux que vous verrez manquer de droiture, et à dire: on ne fait point comme cela à Saint-Cyr, car ce serait le sûr moyen de vous faire haïr partout où vous iriez.'

We are perhaps going further than the speaker, and bringing in a class of ideas alien to her, if we try to see all that her words imply. The novices are not to be frightened, but neither are they to be told that life is better than it is. Nor, again, are they trained to be prigs when they enter it. Education Mme de Maintenon may be said to regard as a preparation for combat against the world; a combat all the harder for women because they do not join in open war, but have to act, according to her lights, purely by patience, address and example. At the same time, they have to possess their own souls and to know the enemy fully. The conventual system, or any system of seclusion, consists in the cultivation of an ignorance which is imperfectly evaded. The Saint-Cyr programme has features that can be commended for others than young women. It may be questioned whether our famous public school system, with all its virtues, develops the power of resistance to the world and to self-interest so well; it disregards the urbane, patient,

supple, invincible resistance that Mme de Maintenon displayed herself. The difference is that between cast iron and wrought iron. With all her rigidity of imagination, with all her admitted ignorance of the glory of life and poetry, with all her distrust of 'the freedom of the natural soul,' Mme de Maintenon has something to say to the question, 'Que faire?'

VI

WE see, at least, how the idea of 'droiture,' or straightness, touches both the moral and the intellectual side of the training. And it is allied to another element, the element of style, which, I have said, marks the scheme of Saint-Cyr with a special distinction. The literary education, which was kept up throughout the school course, was only one side of the matter. Style, in the broader sense, was an instrument or expression of all conduct. 'Though their souls are alike precious to God, the instruction for a demoiselle must be more extended than it is for the daughter of a vine-dresser; the demoiselles must talk good French, and must be taken up quickly when they fail in doing so.' Mme de Maintenon herself is, by general consent, a born writer; nothing distracts attention from the matter of which her words are the plain close-fitting dress. Horace Walpole (June 6, 1756) writes that two or three of her letters 'have made me even a little jealous for my adored Mme de Sévigné.' 'Le style simple, naturel, et sans tour est le meilleur,' says Mme de Maintenon herself. Several of her pupils, like Mme de Caylus, became distinguished writers of memoirs. The notes gathered up long afterwards by the ladies of Saint-Cyr attest the continued presence of a good style, whose chief feature was its breeding. It is in this sense, as well as in its connection with plainness and simplicity of character, that we must speak of style as part of the ideals of Saint-Cyr. It was all in the spirit of the place that Mme de

Maintenon should one day call in the 'six most reasonable' among the 'Blues' for a lesson on politeness. 'Since God has brought you into the world to be ladies, have the manners of ladies.' This tutorial class upon politeness had, indeed, to hear some comic or repellent counsels. The girls are to avoid personal ties and friendships. They are not to 'tutoyer' each other, not to name each other 'tout court,' never to say yes or no without adding 'Madame,' and the like. But above and beyond all this there is the idea of grace and quietude, of a code of rules which comes from the mind itself and qualifies the harshness of life. 'Let your outer surface be composed; hold up your heads, do not drop your chin; modesty is in the eyes, which you must manage modestly, not in the chin.' The advice against indiscretion fills a curious page. It is indiscreet to talk of defects before those who have them; to show knowledge that you have just acquired; to show that you see and hear what people wish to hide from you; to show knowledge of a secret; and when a thing becomes public, to show that you knew it all the time; to read letters when you find them about; to talk of your conscience to those who have not got the care of it; to talk too much about your confessors; to answer too easily for other people; to ask a lady her age; to laugh at foreigners when they do not talk French well. All such counsels reduce themselves to a standard of form and bearing. In certain moods we may say that it is all true but elementary, and good enough for our grandmothers; and undoubtedly there are sublimer pitches of breeding. But in matters of education we have to think of the mass and of where they may fail, and some of these things go well beyond the vulgar conception of a lady. At times the code of manners suggests a different age. If a person of consideration offered us snuff, what should be done? Ought we to refuse it? 'It would be respectful to take a little, and if the rest caused inconvenience, to let it fall imperceptibly.'

There is much else in Saint-Cyr to interest us. The whole

chapter of discipline is handled with singular good sense and address, equidistant from slackness and from Miss Cornelia Blimber.

> 'Pour moi, j'aimerais mieux ce que vous appelez ici une méchante, qui n'est souvent qu'une espiègle, que je ne m'accommoderais d'un esprit de travers, ou d'une mauvaise humeur, quoique pieuse. J'aime assez ce qu'on appelle de méchants enfants, c'est-à-dire enjoués, glorieux, colères, et et même un peu têtus, une fille un peu causeuse, vive et volontaire, parce que ces défauts se corrigent aisément par la raison et la piété et même presque toujours par l'âge seul. Mais un esprit mal fait, un esprit de travers, se soutient en tout. — Qu'appelez-vous, lui dit-on, un esprit de travers, un esprit mal fait? — C'est, répondit Madame, un esprit qui ne se rend point à la raison, qui ne va point au but, qui croit toujours qu'on veut lui faire de la peine, qui donne un mauvais tour à tout, et, qui, sans être malicieux, prend les choses tout autrement qu'on n'a prétendu les dire.'

For the amendment of such characters Mme de Maintenon ever advises methods of gentleness and candour, and she is always speaking against aridity of manner in the mistress. Praise them, she says, encourage them, show that you are full of hopes, and they will come right. There are bad days, when they are excited and have a twist in them: let this slip by, so as not to stake your authority; next day they may do wonders. Punishments must be rigid, inflicted without sign of feeling, and preceded by warnings; in certain cases it is best to wait a week, in order to avoid showing heat in administering them. Some children need great display of firmness, others gentleness. 'I would talk to them often in private, to see if their groundwork is good or bad; I would wait patiently a month, or even a year, if need be, to mend their faults.' All this is of historical interest.

VII

IF we ask what the distinguished shade of Mme de Maintenon has still to tell us about the education of women, one great reservation is obvious. I do not refer to the touch of aloofness in her own character which everyone feels and of which Sainte-Beuve, as usual, has given the best description:

> 'Il y a des moments même où l'on dirait qu'elle charme; mais, dès qu'on la quitte, ce charme ne tient pas, et l'on reprend de la prévention contre sa personne.'

I mean that she lived before the modern conception of the claims of women. She outlived the king by four years; she retired to Saint-Cyr, she died and was buried there in 1719.[1] In 1794, under the Revolution, the place was broken up and her tomb violated; and thus indeed, as Sainte-Beuve says, 'she was treated like a queen.' Just about then Condorcet, in hiding and under a capital sentence, was writing his *Esquisse des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, which preached, perhaps for the first time with real distinctness, the mental, moral, social, political and educational equality of men and women. I know of no work in Mme de Maintenon's time that shows any inkling of this idea, though perhaps the historians of education will correct me. Thus we are faced with

[1] Little was changed when Horace Walpole visited Saint-Cyr (*Letters of H.W.*, ed. Mrs Paget Toynbee, 1904, No. 1275, vol. vii, pp. 316-19, Sept. 17, 1769). He saw her death-room; also a 'large apartment,' turned into an infirmary, and 'decorated with every text of scripture by which could be insinuated that the foundress was a Queen'; saw too the 250 damsels, with the colours of their classes, of which the highest 'were ordered to sing to us the choruses of *Athaliah*'; and others 'acted before us the proverbs and conversations' of the foundress, 'and their adoration of her memory has quite eclipsed the Virgin Mary.' The abbess, whose blessing Walpole begged, was 'a comely old gentlewoman, and very proud of having seen Madame de Maintenon.' 'Could you have passed a day more agreeably?' In an earlier letter (Sept. 3, 1765, No. 1046), Walpole puts the question, 'Had you rather be acquainted with the charming Madame Scarron, or the canting Madame de Maintenon?'

the whole mental difference, in this particular, between the old *régime* and the new. The notion of equal opportunity for the sexes seems to be a definite formulation of the 'enlightenment.' It is one of our greater debts to the eighteenth century. I only add that both the old and the new idea are still very much alive and are still, despite recent bestowals of franchise and the like, in conflict.

It is probably fair to say that the modern doctrine has penetrated further into the Protestant and the Liberal world than it has into the Catholic world. Of course, I am personally all for freedom. But, with this grand reservation, I think that Mme de Maintenon has still something to tell us. For one thing, when she insists on the cultivation of the rational element, she herself anticipates, however unconsciously, a future of which she knew nothing and which would have horrified her. Reason, the goddess of her age, her court, and her circle, was, no doubt, within a century of her death, to be set on the strangest of altars. Still, reason survives all such irrational maltreatment. And, in regard to the education of women, it is not yet superfluous to repeat Mme de Maintenon's sermons. For by reason I here mean something positive, the power of thinking and originating, and not merely cool negative prudent sense; this faculty, indeed, will not soon fail the sex; for, as the Icelandic proverb says, 'Cold are women's counsels.' But what the young girl needs, and what the young boy has from the first, is the power of rationally *resisting* the instructor. Every teacher knows how she can too faithfully reproduce his ideas. The slower-moving lad is apt to catch up afterwards, and to go farther. But I am thinking not merely of pedagogy. Mme de Maintenon, in her counsels of form and grace and style, is on still safer ground. Grace and form, as she knows, only contact with the world can fully give. She is plainly right in prescribing some preparation for that contact during the years of pupilage. If our modern schooling of young women has a drawback, it is that these qualities are sometimes left to take their chance.

Koltsov: a Russian Popular Poet[1]

I

THE name of Koltsov, familiar all over European Russia, is still little known in Britain. Long ago, in September 1886, that admirable pioneer William Ralston wrote an account of him in *The Fortnightly Review*. For the history of his troubled life Ralston drew chiefly on Belinsky, the most notable of Russian critics; translating some of the poems, and vividly describing the melancholy steppe-scenery which is so often their background. In 1880 William Morfill, long the *doyen* of Slavonic studies in this country, gave Koltsov a place of honour among 'the peasant poets of Russia' (*Westminster Review*, July). In 1909, the birth centenary, came Lyashchenko's standard edition of his writings, including a mass of letters. Early in the great war, when anthologies for English readers began to multiply, some of his best known pieces were included in them. But while Pushkin, Lermontov, and even Krylov need less introduction, some other delightful poets of the last century, such as Tyuchev, Fet, Alexis Tolstoy, and Nekrasov, remain almost unrevealed, although they constitute a 'romantic revival' of genuine importance and attractiveness. The place of Koltsov among them is fairly well defined, and his work is full of interest and charm.

Morfill compared him to the Ettrick Shepherd; and certainly both James Hogg and Alexey Vasilievitch Koltsov were self-taught men and natural singers, and both drove their beasts afield. But the Russian, though he introduces the horned hairy wood-satyr and the singing water-nymph, deals less in fairy fancy than the Scot, and he has no trace of the broad fat Lowland humour. He has also been called a

[1] The substance of a paper read to the Russian Circle in Liverpool, Feb. 11, 1921. (The name is accented 'Koltsóv.')

Russian Burns. But he is a Burns with no hatred of the Kirk and with no desire to sing of whisky; a Burns whose fundamental mood is not irony at all, but a kind of baffled *desiderium*, visited now and then by brighter dreams, yet ever returning to the passion for release and escape. Still there are likenesses; for the mind and art of each poet is an unflawed mirror of the homely life that surrounds him. Koltsov's *Village Feast*, with its nicety of detail and of etiquette, recalls *Halloween*. The young black-browed hostess goes round serving the guests, who eat chicken and goose and pie and talk until cockcrow of the crops, and tell old stories, and then pad homeward in the snow. And Koltsov, like Burns, vibrated between the country and the city; he too won fame but not fortune in his lifetime, and died early, at the age of thirty-three. But we need not compare further. The craft of the two poets diverges. Freely as Burns sifts his old words and airs in the composition of his songs, Koltsov depends far less on any originals. He borrows much, as will be seen, from the popular material, but he always invents.

Koltsov had to work with his hands, but he was not a peasant. He was born in 1809 at Voronezh, where his father was a well-to-do cattle-dealer of the small burgher-class. His mother was kind but unlettered, his schooling was brief, and his life was hard from the beginning. The father was a rough and grasping fellow, whose sole idea was that Alexey should look after the cows, improve the business, and straighten out the family lawsuits. The boy never wholly mastered the standard language. But a friendly bookseller gave him the run of the shop, and he found a manual of prosody and began to versify. Like much of his 'literary' poetry afterwards, Koltsov's first experiments have little character, and imitate Zhukovsky or Pushkin. But soon there come records of things truly seen and felt. He shows the 'night-camp of the nomads,' who drowse on the moonless steppe, stare cheerlessly at the distance, and chant legends of their Ukrainian forefathers to the sound of

the reed-pipe. A year later he is telling of his own life; he is now aged twenty:

> 'I lived on the pastures with the cows. I would walk off my sorrow in the meadows; over the fields, along with the pony, I dragged out a sorry life alone. Like a wild man, I would shelter in a hovel from the rain.'

A brighter passage follows. He has a beloved mistress. He will never tell the girls of Voronezh her name; but if, in their walks abroad, they will look for the fairest, the simplest, the frankest, and the kindest amongst themselves, they will know who she is. We do not know who she was; probably a certain Dunyasha, a serf-girl in Koltsov's home. We hear that during his absence his father spirited her away and sold her; and it was said that she was forced to marry a Cossack, or died heartbroken, or both. According to the editors, Koltsov refers to her in one of his latest pieces, written a dozen years afterwards, entitled *The Star:*

> Betake me where I may,
> A certain diamond star, ere break of day,
> Stands there in front of me,
> And meets my look for ever tauntingly.
> The hour of parting once it watched afar,
> But I have long forgot both hour and star.
> And yet that lone insuperable beam
> Can ne'er to me familiar seem:
> To-day the soul with tenderness it captures;
> To-morrow it exalts, enraptures;
> And bitter grief comes next;
> And always for the lost my heart is vexed.

Koltsov does not, like Nekrasov in the ferocious satire entitled *The Birthplace*, scarify his father in rhyme; but he uses many epithets in his letters, and describes the domestic harrying, that abuse of the *patria potestas*, which embitters many a Russian folk-poem. He consoled himself in Voronezh with a few intimate friends. One of these, Srebryansky,

a youth who had awakened and encouraged his gift, Koltsov was to lose; and his letter of lament, high-pitched as it is, reveals a strain of feeling and imagery that is frequent both in his verse and correspondence:

> 'The beautiful world of a beautiful soul has vanished from sight, without ever speaking out... On the fertile soil of earth man manures his land and scatters his grain, but will gather no produce if the summer burns up the root. The dews of the morning do not help him, he must have rain in season. But on *his* life not a drop of this blessing of the earth has come—need and sorrow have crushed the body of the sufferer. Grievous thought! There was, and that not so long ago, a dear person; and now he is not, and you will never see him, and your very call to him dies without answer in the insensate distance.'

II

IN 1831, some years before this calamity, Koltsov had paid his first visit to Moscow. The introductions of his friend Stankevich opened a new world to him. To the two great cities he owed his literary friends, and his share of happiness; but to his unhappiness, to his life in the country, we owe most of his poetry. On one visit he met Pushkin, whose death in 1837 drew from him another outburst, both in verse and prose. The lines called *The Forest* describe how the storm rages like the wood-demon, strips the boughs, and silences the flooding song of the nightingale:—the 'nightingale-prophet,' as Koltsov calls Pushkin in a letter. In Moscow he came to know Belinsky, whose commanding position made the path of the young provincial easier, and whose good sense guided his genius. His letters to Belinsky are the diary of his soul. Vehement as they are, Koltsov seems to have kept his head well in Moscow and Petersburg. His chief affliction was the legal business on which his father despatched him; and we find him writing desperate and too deferential appeals for aid to his powerful

friends. But most men lose their dignity when they go to law, and Koltsov kept prudently aloof from politics and literary feuds.

His first volume, a small one and well-sifted, appeared in 1835. He could not be quite unhappy, for he had now found his true subject and his true form. The subject was the peasant world, and the peasant-spirit, and his own experience. The form varied. Though Koltsov wrote much, and often well, in the usual measures, his favourite and characteristic ones are rhymeless and irregular, suggesting those of actual folk-verse. He did not produce a great deal; most of his poems, about a hundred and sixty in number, are short, and only one of them is over a hundred lines in length. Many of the best were composed in Voronezh, in the gloomy intervals between his trips to the capitals. At home he craved in vain for company and congenial talk. The days spent on the steppe were inspiring but too lonely. To distract himself, he would sit in his room and imagine conversations with his absent friends; once he was cheered by a visit from the poet Zhukovsky. Or he would go among the people and collect popular songs, some of which are preserved. He had to pick the good ones out of a mass of trash and ribaldry, at the cost of drinking and bestowing much vodka. Once he sends a specimen to his friend Kraevsky, and gives an account of the ritual. The young people take hands in a round, and sing and dance; the leader stands in the middle, and flings a garland on the ground while the rest chant; until one of the girls steps out, picks it up, and crowns him with a kiss. But this is an interlude; and most of the letters are cries of ennui and revolt, mingled with talk of Koltsov's own affairs or verses, and with comments on books and poetry. There was one interlude, which promised fairly but ended ill, and which comes out in sharp outline like a tale by Chekhov.

In 1839 Koltsov addresses an impassioned poem to an unnamed lady, whom he represents as on the road to ruin.

He offers to save her from her friends, who are in truth her foes; and she, in turn, will 'lighten the heavy road of his destiny like a brilliant star.' Early in 1841, in a letter to his sister, he speaks of a certain 'poor Varya' as one who is 'lost for good and all,' and for whom death is the only issue. He had warned her in due time, but in vain. Two months later we find him writing to Belinsky about this lady, Varvara Grigorevna Lebedeva:

> 'In Voronezh there was a woman whom I knew and had known long. . . . I courted her for some two years "without word and without hope" [a line from Pushkin]. I wrote her many letters from Moscow and Petersburg; not half-a-line in reply! I arrive home, I present myself to her,—and, in a word, we came to an understanding. You must first know what manner of woman she is:—she is a wonder! Of my own height, shapely beyond belief, devilish pretty, clever, fairly well read;—has read, thought, suffered much, and experienced much. Big blue eyes, dark eyebrows, a body like marble, chestnut hair, tresses of silk, marvellous tresses; the best foot in Voronezh; and, what is more, she is rather in love with me.'

And he describes his happiness; but in three weeks comes the revulsion. He still says that she has given him new life, that she is ready to go with him to Petersburg, or anywhere else; she is a widow, free as air. He would rather die than throw her over. But—perhaps she will untie the knot herself. He is not sure that he can respond to her for long. She is capricious and fantastical, and demands new food for her fantasy every day. Reality does not exist for her; she will follow her whim, be it to her destruction. She has no deep natural feeling. The knot was cut by Koltsov's own poverty and illness. He could not keep her, and she had to go away as a lady's companion. He can never forget the two months he spent with her; but, hearing later that she may

return to Voronezh, is afraid that no good will come of that. With this our knowledge of the affair ends. Meantime Koltsov's fatal malady, consumption, is declaring itself, and his domestic troubles increase. His father wishes to deprive him of comfort; his sister is estranged from him, and her wedding guests are intrusive. For all this, in his verse, there breaks out to the end the note of youthful adventure and fortunate love. His very last poem is an example. In the snowbound evening the village girl awaits her man and murmurs over his promise that he would surely come:

Moon or no moon, my horse
Will discover the way;
The foul fiend in the dusk
Shall not lead him astray.

Latterly Koltsov had certain consolations. He had many admirers, and something like an established fame, which he was not too sick to relish. He died in 1842, and his monument stands in his birthplace. The common notion that verse endures holds good of popular verse above all; for when once this has found its artist, it bids fair to live as long as the people that speaks the language in which it is written.

III

THE scholars have analysed Koltsov's debts to the great floating stock of Russian folk-poetry. He adopts its idiom, and also the diminutives, affectionate or scornful, in which the Slavonic tongues abound, and which defeat the translator no less than the pleasant handcuffed phrases like *flame-tremor* or *soul-maiden*. He uses the fixed epithets, the gray eagle, the bright hawk, and the like, which often recall those of Old English. Above all he appropriates the popular themes and sentiments. One lyrical monologue, *The Ring*, embodies a superstition and a symbol. As so often in these poems, a woman is the speaker. Her lover has left her a gold ring for a token, and she tries to melt it in the candle. 'Without him, I need thee not; without him thou liest on

my hand like a stone on my heart. So melt thou like a golden teardrop, thou memorial of my dear one!' But the ring, though blackened, does not melt; it clinks unharmed on the table, as a sign that he is constant. But this piece is exceptional; the staple of Koltsov's verse is the daily life of the peasant, ploughing, sowing, reaping, loving, and hating. His longest poem, *The Harvest*, is pure description without any drama. It can be read in Mr P. E. Matheson's[1] elegant version; but I quote the opening literally to show the technique. The translator is met by two difficulties. He is in danger of imparting to the simple language a childish or common turn, which is just what the original escapes. Also the metre resembles nothing in English. The fixed beat falls on the third of the five syllables in the line. The other beats (one or none) vary in position. But the lines reduce themselves to a few well-marked forms, which are represented in the following tracing. It should be read or chanted with some extra weight on the middle stress, and with rather less than the natural weight on any others. A line like 'It has frówned on us' gives the normal type; the rest are variations.

Rèd and fíerily
Dàwn has flúshed on us,
And the vápour sprèads
O'er eàrth's coúntenance;

And the dáy has flàmed
Hòtly, súnnily,
And the fog aloft
On the uplands there

Now is thickenìng
Into cloudy black;
Blackly, cloudily,
It has frowned on us,

[1] In *Holy Russia*, Oxford, 1918; several other poems of Koltsov are included.

It has frowned on us,
As bethinking it,
As remembering
Its òwn mótherland.

After this picture in deep water-colour are described the reaping and sheaving of the waves of rye and the prayers and fears and thanksgivings of the villagers. But Koltsov usually takes shorter flights, and portrays personal emotion, and he often uses still more elusive measures. Verse translation is greatly a matter of luck, for 'it needs happy moments for this skill,' and one bad line spoils a short poem; so that it seems best in these examples to keep to prose, adding now and then a few lines to show the tune.

Here is another monologue by a woman. It would be hard to find a more intense expression of chill solitude:

Winds are blowing,
Winds tumultuous,
Clouds are marching,
Cloudy darknesses;

And the bríght wòrld
Wholly vanishes,
And the faír sùn
Wholly vanishes.

In the wét mìst
Only váporous
Nìght behind it
Fàlleth, dárkening.

This is the setting; and the speaker goes on:

'In this time of evil weather to live alone is chilly to the heart. Another bosom he must have; some burning soul, some fair maiden. With her, winter is warm summer; in ill-fortune, sorrow is no sorrow.'

A counterpart, from the man's point of view, is found in *The Nightingale*, which is based on the widespread theme of

'the bird that bears the message.' This is one of the best known of all Koltsov's lyrics:

'Sing not thou, nightingale, under my window; fly away to the woods of my own land! . . .

Tell of mé, without hèr,
Fading, withering,
As the grass on the steppe,
Autumn facing it.

Without her, the moon at night is overcast to me; at mid-day, flameless goes the sun. Without her, who shall receive me kindly? On whose bosom shall I bow my head for rest? Without her, whose speech shall make me smile? Whose song, whose greeting shall be after my own heart? Why sing, nightingale, at my window? Fly away, fly away to the maid of my soul!'

IV

THERE is no room here to illustrate all the moods or measures of Koltsov. He knows, ardent as he is, 'that love is but one of many passions,' and presents just as clearly the regrets of age. In one place he symbolizes them: 'little sun shines, but in autumn; flowerets blow, but out of season,' and all youthfulness and heart's desire have gone. In another, regularly rhymed, the idea recurs:

Deep the golden time is
Sunk, that once I tasted;
Youthful strength and prime is
With my body wasted.

In this instance the old man compares himself to an oak lying and rotting on the hillside, and remembers too how his beloved had once played him false. But Koltsov also celebrates the spirit of youth. In *The Hawk's Meditation* there is a strain that may recall the adventurous mood of Robert Louis Stevenson. This, again, is not a love-poem, but a poem of freedom. The hawk is the youth, chafing

alone at home, asking whether his wings are tied, and whether he is afraid to go forth and pass the time alone with 'stepdame-destiny.' No, he is not afraid, he will go. This state of mind, called in Russian *udal*, is often pictured in the folk-poetry. Wild young blood easily drives the villager forth to travel, or banditry, or crime. There is the belief, which Westerners are ready to think is peculiarly Russian, in the rights of feeling, in the impulse to 'throw your cap over the mills.' The unaffected expression of this temper in art is what Koltsov catches from the popular Muse, and reproduces. Conversely, he also reproduces the feeling of bondage, when the right to *udal* is denied. In most of his scenes the man, however unlucky, has the best of the bargain, for he can go away. The girl is a prisoner. She is forced to leave home and face the oppression of her husband's relatives; or she has to wed a rich old man and to bring home, gifts indeed, but also silent reproaches, to her family. Sometimes the strain is lighter. She flies with mingled dread and longing from the bright blue devouring eyes of the youth who has danced with her all the evening:

What's to laugh at, is more
  Than I ever can see;
And who gave him the right
  Thus to run after me?

Koltsov has not much humour, or time for it. But in one poem, *The Two Farewells*, which has little more substance than a *proverbe*, it is present. The village beauty has parted with two admirers. The first of them wept, and fell on his face, and bedewed his handkerchief, and bade her Godspeed, and rode away to foreign parts; and she was 'quite jolly.' And how, asks the friend, did you part with the other?

'Twas not the same;
He wept not, he!
'Tis I that still
Weep all the time.

Ah cold, so cold,
Was his embrace;
Drily he passed
The word with me...
He waved his hand,
He would not bow,
He would not look
Upon my face;
He sped his horse,
And off he went!

My pretty one,
Which of these two,
Dost thou, in truth,
Remember best?
Surely, the first,—
I pity him;
The other, he's
The man I love.

V

ONE other class of Koltsov's compositions should be mentioned, namely his *dumy*, or 'reflections,' which are not in the popular manner at all, though they are sometimes in the popular measures. They mostly date from the years 1836-7, and were inspired, so we learn, by the speculative verse of Koltsov's friends, who were students of Schiller. They show at least that the poet tried to find words for the general enigma; and he puts his questions with dignity, although, as Belinsky observed, the answers are not remarkable. There is a kind of puzzled metaphysic, which has its own pathos. The German influence is evident in *The Poet*. 'All nature is *in* the soul of man; her powers are steeped in feeling, and warmed by love.' The supreme Artist is the inventor of the human drama. The eternal Spirit comes to consciousness in man, and triumphs over death. A more naïf cry of perplexity is heard in *The Great Secret*, which has

found its way into several languages, and which opens thus:

Storm-clouds carry water,
Water earth refreshes,
Earth brings forth her fruitage,
Stars in heaven unfathomed!
Life on earth unfathomed!
Now is wondrous Nature
Sombre, now illumined.
Old with doubting over
Many a mighty secret,
Ages after ages
Vanish unreturning;
And the Everlasting
Asks of each the question
'Where and what the issue?'
Each one only answers,
'Question thou my brother!'

The solution, for Koltsov, seems to have been a simple trust in providence. The *dumy* are of interest, for they show that he tried to find some mental outlet from his own hampered fate, and that even he, in that fermenting time, was caught up by a stray fold of the reigning idealist philosophy.

I have tried to let Koltsov speak for himself, and to avoid such critical remark as befits only a native writer. He came in the first modern flowering-time of the Russian poetic genius. Pushkin, Lermontov, and their group, all wrote their best in the period between 1820 and 1845, which in England was a time of transition. None of these more famous writers could play on Koltsov's chosen instrument. Some of them inspired or encouraged him, but he remained himself. He had precursors in his own line, but he overshadows them. He did not exhaust the peasant mind, and he seldom reveals, as Krylov does, its humorous and observant wisdom. But he rescued for poetry many a cry of weariness, anger, disquiet, or exultation that would otherwise have been whirled away and forgotten in the snowstorm of the steppe.

The Lyrics of Fet

I

THE English reader hears little of Fet, whom the Russians rank so high as a lyrical artist and who was the admired friend, the cherished confidant, both of Turgenev and of Tolstoy. His autobiography entitled *My Recollections*, 1848-1889, published at Moscow in two volumes in 1890, has not been translated. His collected *Lyrical Poems* (two volumes, St Petersburg, 1894) are not much quoted in our anthologies for learners. I draw on these four volumes, though unable to procure a fifth, in which Fet describes *The Early Years of My Life;* but for these the brief memoir by his friend Nikolay Strakhov which precedes the poems supplies an outline. As to the verses here translated, they are offered in the hope of leading others to the original. Like most things of the sort they are but shadowy tracings; but they are fairly close to the sense, and the metres are preserved. Some of Fet's best lyrics might not daunt a translator who was a professed poet; but I have evaded them owing to the problem of the double rhymes. These abound in Russian, and Fet is a master of them; but in English as we know they are fewer and more monotonous. We have our participles in *-ing* and *-ed*; but the Russian verb, like the noun and adjective, is rich in trochaic and dactylic inflexions. When the lines are short the difficulty is all the greater. The reader must also please to try and imagine a Tennysonian fulness and subtlety in Fet's management of sound; a natural ease and directness which will remind him less of Tennyson; and a constant broidery of fancy often rising into imaginative passion.

II

AFANASY Afanasevich Fet, born in 1820 at Novosyolki, a village on the river Zusha, near the old town of Mtsensk in the government of Orel, owed his un-Slavonic

surname to ill fortune. His German mother, born Charlotte Bekker, parted from her first husband, one Föth, and then married Afanasy Neofitovich Shenshin, a well-to-do country squire of established family and conservative habit, who disapproved of poetry. But the ceremony was performed, by mistake, with Lutheran rites only. Those of the Orthodox church were added, but not till after the birth of the poet, the first child. Yet they were required to legalize his position. So Fet had for long years to wear the name, in a Russianized form, of his mother's former spouse. He was always being called upon to explain, at school, at college, and in after life; and yet he could not explain or even investigate for fear of discovering something prejudicial to his mother. It is not clear why no one gave him the explanation; but late in the day when he was past fifty he came upon an old document which furnished it; and in 1873, by a ukase of Alexander II he was authorized to take the name of his own father Shenshin. The emperor, he tells us, 'was good enough to remark, *Je m'imagine que cet homme a dû souffrir dans sa vie*.' The suffering was real enough; but this curious disability does not seem much to have hindered Fet's career, and as Fet he is always known in literature.

His half-German parentage also left its mark on his talent. He spoke both Russian and German in his home. He was brought up not only on Pushkin but on Heine, whose tunes can be heard in many a poem. It may be a coincidence; he does not mention any Jewish admixture in his blood; but the portrait taken in his sixty-second year (though not that taken in his thirty-seventh) has a noticeably Hebraic cast. His presence in middle life is thus described by Count Ilya Tolstoy in *Reminiscences of Tolstoy*:[1]

> 'He had a long black beard, turning grey, a clearly-marked Jewish type of face, and little feminine hands

[1]Tr. George Calderon, 1914, p. 151. The whole chapter (xiii) contains interesting notices of Fet.

with remarkably long well-cared-for nails. He spoke in a deep bass voice and was perpetually breaking into a long-drawn cough that rattled like small shot. Then he would stop and rest, with his head bent down and a long H'm . . . h-m-m-m! . . . stroke his beard awhile, and go on talking. Sometimes he was extremely witty, and entertained the whole house with his jokes. His jokes were all the better because they always came out quite unexpectedly even to himself.'

In 1844 Fet finished his course in the philological or arts faculty of Moscow University. Many of his college poems are preserved and show his skill in playing on a sequence of echoing vowels and on a refrain.

Storm on the skies in the evening,
Noise of the wrath of the sea;
Storm on the sea, and the thronging
Thoughts that are torture to me;

Storm on the sea, and insurgent
Thoughts that are clamorous in me,
Cloud after cloud flying blackly,
Noise of the wrath of the sea.

(1842: *Melodies*, No. ii.)

This is almost Japanese in its brevity; but Russian as a rule does without the auxiliary verb in the present tense and lends itself to such effects. Happy, too, the poet who starts with this absorbing passion for technique; his faults will at any rate never be those of the slattern; and there is a good chance that his power of expression will keep pace with his coming experience. Still from the first Fet, despite his bent for pure verbal music, has something to say; he presents a definite mood or a clear picture, and usually both together. Here is another student lyric of the same date; I despair of echoing its reverberations; but a translator has no business with apologies:

My thoughts are deep: I mark, with eyelids falling,
Though not in sleep,
The young day's murmur, unto young hopes calling;
My thoughts are deep.

I am with thee still, though strong compulsion bind me
And chain my will;
And all day, whether cloud or sunshine find me,
I am with thee still.

See, high in heaven the maiden moon, soft-beaming,
Floats lightly now;
The waters kiss for ever, downward streaming;
But where art thou?

(*Melodies*, No. vi.)

III

IN 1840 Fet published a small volume that was little noticed; he continued to print verse in various journals, but had to wait ten years for anything like recognition. The year 1850, so auspicious for Tennyson, laid the foundation of Fet's fame. His *Poems* then appeared; a still more successful volume followed in 1856. By this time he was the friend or associate of most of the leading men of letters. In 1845 began his long but not very burdensome period of military service; from which he retired in 1858 with the rank of staff captain of cavalry. In 1848 his *Recollections* begin. There seems to be no sound of battle in his verse. During the Crimean war he was in the force posted by the Esthonian shores. He expatiates long and well upon sport and fishing. He explains for example how to net fish in a reservoir which is wholly frozen over, by an ingenious method of cutting ice-holes and prising up the surface with wooden staves. Fet is all his life an open-air man. He is like Turgenev and Tolstoy; always after partridge, snipe, or quail, or blackcock. I shall quote one of his hunting poems presently. He relates the story familiar in Tolstoy's biography of the Count's conflict

in 1858 with a she-bear. She jumped upon him and almost made an end of him, but the guide ran up and scared her off with a little switch; whereon Tolstoy got up on his feet 'with the skin of his forehead hanging down his face.' His first word was, 'Whatever will Fet say?' and, says Fet, 'of that word I am proud unto this day.'

Fet is an observer from the first, and in his *Recollections* there are some echoes of his poetry. The following scene is on the gulf of Finland:

> 'Marvellous days, marvellous moonlit nights! How pleasant to fall asleep to the lisping of that light undulation, as one would to the endless stories of an omniscient grandmother! But as the undulation swelled, the crashes of the separate waves were so compounded that a shock was distinctly to be heard, like that of a ship's bottom rising and heavily rattling on the sonorous grits. How often did it happen that I reluctantly left my bed and looked out on the shore through the little window:—nothing to be seen, only the white-headed hares jumping in the moonshine as far as the eye could reach!'

The white hares, or white horses, do not come in the poem called *The Storm*, written a generation later; but the scene is not unlike. By chance Fet uses here the measure of *In Memoriam*; and we know how anything in English verse in this measure (even if written in Ben Jonson's time) sounds like a far-off mimicry of Tennyson:

> The breeze comes fresh, the night falls black,
> The blustering ocean angrier swells;
> The granite is bedashed with bells
> Of foam that leaps or gushes back.
>
> The surf is chafing more and more,
> As though its hissing billows broke
> With ponderous and massive stroke
> Of iron hammers on the shore;

As though the Sea-God ready sat,
Omnipotent, implacable,
And threatened with his trident fell,
And smote, and cried, *Take that! and that!*

(1883, *The Sea*, No. xiv.)

IV

YET scenery is not the staple of Fet's memoir. He talks in a genial, circumstantial, and above all faithful fashion of his family affairs and his friends; making a point, he tells us, of touching nothing up; for he is concerned with a record not with a work of art. His picture of old Russian life in the country makes us realize the veracity of the background painted by the two great novelists. Fet also reports at first hand, their estrangements and reconciliations. Turgenev and Tolstoy write in the sharpest style of one another and of one another's books to 'uncle' Fet, who acts as a non-conductor.

For one noted episode his memoir is the original authority. In 1860 he had settled down, a married man, at Stepanovka in his native district. Here he was to stay for seventeen years struggling with mankind and nature and slowly converting to human uses a waterless and almost treeless place; and here, building his nest valiantly, he brought his friends. Next year he was visited by Turgenev and Tolstoy together, both of them warm admirers of himself and of his poetry. At his breakfast-table occurred the scene described in full by Mr Aylmer Maude in his *Life of Tolstoy*[1] and there translated from Fet's *Recollections*. Turgenev's daughter, much to his approval, is mending the ragged clothing of some poor people. Tolstoy pleasantly remarks that the girl, herself well dressed, was 'acting an insincere and theatrical farce.' Before Fet can step in Turgenev, pale with wrath, exclaims in the presence of the hostess: 'Then I will silence you with an insult'—an idiom rendered by Mr Maude,

[1] *The Life of Tolstoy, First Fifty Years*, 5th ed., 1911, pp. 214 ff.

'punch your head,' and by Count Ilya Tolstoy, 'threatened to box his ears.' He seizes his own head in his hands, leaves the room, returns to apologize to the lady, and goes out again. Fet in his mildly humorous way explains how he was forced at once to get rid of his friends; how Turgenev had his own carriage; but how the horses in Tolstoy's vehicle, which to their annoyance had no shafts, at first declined to remove him and proceeded to trot home, but finally obeyed and went.

There follows a three-cornered correspondence of which the essential part will be found in Mr Maude's pages. Turgenev sends an apology to Tolstoy but breaks off relations and offers to fight him if he likes. There is no fight. Eight years later, having found religion, Tolstoy makes an offer of reconciliation which is accepted. Fet, who has meanwhile himself quarrelled with Turgenev, now also takes occasion to be reconciled; but leaves in his memoir some unwontedly bitter pages on the failings of his friend. The two novelists meet again, but with perpetual reserves. Turgenev is, now at least, the more generous of the two, to the last saluting Tolstoy as the chief and unrivalled genius of Russia and vainly entreating him to keep to pure art. Tolstoy's invincible pride clothes itself, honestly but all the more fatally, in the speech of religious humility. To 'uncle' Fet he continues long to bear a true affection; but (says Count Ilya Tolstoy) during Fet's last years they were 'estranged and met more rarely,' Tolstoy being 'absorbed in his new ideas'; which to Fet must have seemed hardly intelligible. 'The Christian teaching,' as Mr Maude puts it, 'had brought, if not a sword, at least estrangement.' Some later remarks[1] of Tolstoy about his old friend cannot be called handsome. 'At sixteen, Fet wrote, "The spring bubbles, the moon shines, and she loves me," and he went on writing, and at sixty he wrote, "She loves me, the spring bubbles, and the moon shines."' And again:

[1] Maude, *Life of L. Tolstoy, Later Years*, ed. 1910, pp. 372, 475.

> 'Fet says he wants nothing, and his demands are very modest. Give him a soft bed, a well-cooked steak, a bottle of good wine, and a couple of good horses—and he wants no more!

So wrote the great old magnificent insupportable fanatic.

Fet indeed, despite a few outbreaks, comes best out of the whole comedy, saved by his sense of humour. In 1870 he and William Ralston were staying with Turgenev at Spasskoye. Ralston must have been the first traveller to introduce the Russian folk and its tales to English readers; and he watches with amazement the humours of the peasant festivity at the close of Lent—the first square meal, the singing, the great vodka-drinking when the long fast is over. Ribbons are dispensed to the peasant women; and Turgenev and Ralston just escape to the balcony from the boisterous crowd, before the eyes of the disgusted Fet; who cannot understand the pleasure of making people 'as drunk as beasts,' and then edging away from them. He is often saner than his eminent companions.

V

HIS life at Stepanovka was varied. He served long as a justice of the peace and has described many of his curious cases. In theory Fet was at first a very mild liberal believing in free elections; but in temper he was conservative and rather indifferent to politics, retaining the prejudices of his upbringing. For this detachment he was often somewhat unjustly reproached. He does allude to the 'world-event' of 1861, the emancipation of the serf, but not exactly with enthusiasm; he veered later towards the camp of reaction, and in a pointed parable he expresses his feelings towards the reforms:

> 'A boy, who has lived happily under the parental roof, is despatched to a distant school. His father and mother and grandmother embrace him and weep. No one knows,

he himself least of all, whether he will be better or worse off in a strange land. But he feels in a confused way the approach of freedom, and his eyes are dry. He does not wish to judge, and cannot judge, of his position hereafter.'

But in fact he was a pure artist. On one occasion he was asked to 'illustrate' with his pen some important economic project:

'I did not answer a word, not feeling any energy within me for illustrating any occurrence whatsoever. I could never understand art interesting itself in anything except beauty.'

His verse, in consequence, shows as little trace of the social and political turmoil as if it had been written in Victorian Essex. He is apart from the people, and the peasant seems never to figure in his poetry. There is none of that ground-swell of wrath, rebellion or compassion that is heard in Nekrasov or Koltsov. Fet knew just what he could do and did nothing else. While at Stepanovka he wrote very little verse and his friends were for ever trying to persuade him that he was not a dead poet. In 1861 Turgenev writes, 'Do not chase away the Muse, when she takes it into her head to pay you a visit'; and in 1867 Tolstoy is still more insistent:

'Your stream is flowing all the time, yielding the same given quantity of buckets of water—that is, of force. The wheel on which it used to fall is broken and out of order; but the stream is flowing still, and if it has sunk into the earth, it will come out somewhere else and begin to turn other wheels.'

The wheel began to turn again towards the end of Fet's life at Stepanovka, but only recovered its pace when he had escaped from that thankless scene. In 1877 he migrated to the far pleasanter estate of Vorobyovka on the river Tuskar, in the government of Kursk, which lies next to that of Orel on the south. The scene was one to re-awaken a poet. He had, says Strakhov, a noble park of oak trees, a garden full

of herons, rooks, and nightingales, a fountain in front of his balcony, and flowerbeds sloping down to the river. He turned over the work of the estate to a manager, and began to write. And now his old Moscow discipline in the classics bore good and ample fruit. Fet had long before commenced to translate; he had struggled with Horace and had made a version of the *Ars Poetica;* and now, aided by a German Latinist, Kindler, a scholar of the rigorous kind, he undertook and finished the whole of Horace. Fet's activity in this field is very surprising. He put into Russian all Virgil, fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses*, Juvenal, Persius, Catullus, Tibullus, and the sixth elegy of Propertius, and published them all between 1883 and 1890. I have seen nothing of these works except the titles; the Horace is named in the British Museum catalogue. Not content with this performance, Fet translated *Faust;* also at the instance of Tolstoy, Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea*, besides two of the lesser works. His new original poetry came out in various issues, beginning in 1883, under the title of *Evening Fires*. This portion of his life, says Strakhov, was one of 'repose and consideration, solid fame, and quiet literary activity.' In 1889 his jubilee as a poet was kept with many honours at Moscow, and he lived three years more. We hear that he had a preference for coming to an end in solitude; and that in his last illness, feeling the end to be near, he sent his wife out to buy something, and died in his chair.

VI

IN the standard edition Fet's poems are arranged according to his own design under topics, and are dated in chronological order under each topic. The reader who would study his poetic development must therefore pass to and fro between one section and other. I make no attempt to do this; but some characteristics are clear, and are equally visible in the *Elegies and Thoughts*, in the *Melodies*, in *Evenings and Nights*, in *Spring*, *Summer*, *Autumn*, and *Winter*, in *Snows*,

in *The Sea*, and in *Evening Fires*. These are the chief divisions and the titles are poetical and significant. There are also many occasional or complimentary pieces addressed to his friends; who include, besides those already named, the lyric master Tyuchev, the poet Count Alexis Tolstoy, and the Grand Duke Constantine, one of Fet's admirers in his old age. In all there are about five hundred separate pieces, none of them long. One feature of Fet's poetry is the predominance of landscape. Another is the natural deepening of note which ensues on his resumption of poetry after many years of fallowness. Yet another, which distinguishes him from most Russian poets, is that though being a Russian he is of course melancholy, he is not miserable. The troubles and convulsions of his time and country, as already observed, do not disturb his art. By nature and temper he seems to reach the kind of inner tranquillity for the attainment of which his friend Tolstoy offered so many difficult recipes. His portrait already mentioned wears an expression at once serene and alert. At the same time Fet's poetry though it often reflects this mood is free from Parnassian coldness and often rises to intensity. It remains to add a few examples.

VII

HE sounds the changes on the four seasons, with a preference for the spring. It is the sudden Russian spring associated with the break-up of the ice and the joyful salutations of Eastertide. He tells how a warm wind comes, and then the 'receding chain of tumps' gets greener as the snow melts, and the familiar road, long swathed in white, rises into view again 'like a dark-grey serpent'; how the bees begin to buzz under the wild cherry-tree; how he cannot endure the frigid beauty and sober aspect of the pine-trees, which recall the winter; how the quiverings of the current hitherto concealed become visible beneath the ice; and how transparent clouds and no longer only sullen shadows are mirrored in the pond. There is a short piece which might be entitled *Sun and Earth*, upon the melting of the ice:

Skies again are deep and bare;
Scents of spring are on the air;
Nearer, nearer every hour
Draws the bridegroom in his power.

Coffined in her icy shell,
Under some dream-woven spell,
See her sleeping, stark and cold,
Still in that enchantment's hold.

From her lids his birds of spring
Fan the snowflakes with their wing;
Out of deathly dreams and chill
Ooze the teardrops, melting still.

(*Spring*, No. xxiii.)

There are also many autumnal scenes; and here as elsewhere the poet and nature are penetrated with one and the same emotion:

Again the autumnal dawn is firing
The skies with shivering, treacherous ray;
Again the birds are out, conspiring
For flight into a warmer day.

A kind of happy sadness deadens
The heart, with sweet pang fugitive;
And through the night the maple reddens,
In love with life, too weak to live.

(*Autumn*, No. xiv.)

Fet watches the flowers and trees in their autumn dress. In the garden where he wandered overnight, the dahlias stood like so many odalisques; in the morning he goes there again and the frost has pinched them. The poplar rises erect and alone overlooking the dead steppes and remembers the warm south. But on certain days there is a *renouveau*, when the death of the old year is too magnificent to be pitied. Also there is the September rose, the last. Fet wrote these lines on the eve of his seventieth birthday:

When she her crimson lips uncloses
To frosty breath of morning gray,
How strange the smile of yonder rose is,
This transient September day!

How bravely, whilst the titmouse flutters
Amongst the bushes fallen bare,
The spring's old greeting still she utters,
Stands forth with that imperial air,

And blossoms,—with the hope unshaken
To quit her chilly bed, and rest
In ecstasy, the last rose taken
By the young Mistress to her breast!

(*Autumn*, No. xii.)

That is, by the lady of the house, the mistress of the garden. Yet not all these autumnal pictures are pensive. Fet, we saw, was a sportsman, and has left one excellent hunting-piece. They are out for wolf; but they start a hare, and the hounds cannot be kept from going after her. My colleague, Mr Slepchenko, informs me that the huntsman's 'red cap' is a tall one, not unlike a grenadier's helmet, with a red crest, and rimmed with fur. The poem is entitled *Hunting with Hounds:*

The last sheaf carted from the naked plains,
The herd is through the naked stubble treading;
The garden sinks to silence, and the cranes
Over the lime-plot in slow flight are threading.

Last night, upon the step, the evening shower
Froze into stars, when sunsets first grew colder;
Now saddle the swift hunter,—'tis the hour—
And strap the ringing horn upon the shoulder!

Afield, afield! on each green hillock now
The huntsmen stand alertly at their pickets,
And feast their eyes upon that wooded brow
In motley leaf, and on the scattered thickets.

The deep thick aspen-copse has long gone red
  While from its tops the foliage is falling,
And o'er the echoing, twisting river-bed
  Awaits the bay of hounds and bugles calling.

Last night was found the wolf-brood in its lair.
  Well, will our hunt be prosperous this morning?
Look, look! beneath the hoofs has flashed a hare!
  Lord, what a mess and flurry, without warning[1]!

'Gallop across the trail, and beat them back!'
  Far off, already, scurries Redcap riding!
But the wood, filled with voices of the pack,
  Tenfold reverberates their angry chiding.

(1858: *Autumn*, No. iv.)

'Never did I hear such gallant chiding'—the translator may steal the word of Shakespeare's Theseus on his Spartan hounds.

VIII

FET then can be cheerful and external; and even when he is painting scenery he often keeps himself out of the way and simply signs the picture. He likes effects of stillness interrupted by a single sound, and cares little for events. The following lines are from his *Evenings and Nights* (No. xv):

Clear and still the summer even;
  Look, the willows there are dreaming;
Pale and red the western heaven;
  Where it bends, the brook is gleaming.

Over woody highlands straying
  Gusts from height to height are glancing;
From the valley sounds the neighing
  And the trot of droves advancing.

Also he is seldom dramatic; the speaker in the poem is usually Fet. But one exception, the piece called *The Prisoner*,

[1] Literally, 'everything is upset, and the gruel (*kasha*) has begun to boil.'

may be quoted. I give it in prose; it is a marvel of conciseness, the original containing only thirty-nine words, which give the whole scene, and the prisoner's emotion, instantaneously. The lines run to this measure:

The ancient repining
Is silent in me;
The ocean is shining;
To-morrow I 'm free.

(*Melodies*, No. xxiii.)

'The dense nettle rustles under the window; the green willow hangs tentwise.

Joyous boats are in the blue distance; the iron of the lattice screaks beneath my file.

Past sorrow is stilled in my breast; freedom and the sea shine before me.

My heart is higher, the weary longing is quieted; and the ear listens, and the hand files on.'

On the meaning of the word *toská*, translated here 'weary longing,' but not really translatable,—since it includes, like *desiderium*, both the future and the past—the best authority is Madame N. Jarintsov, whose book on *The Russians and their Language* (Oxford, 1916) throws more light on the shades of that language than any other that I know. Madame Jarintsov rejects all the usual renderings—yearning, longing, despondency, and the like—and remarks, in her pleasing English:

'You may overlook, by chance, a young girl painfully clasping her arms in some lonely wood or garden, and overhear her repeating to herself the only word, *toská*, *toská*, and you will know what she feels like . . . The Russians are apt to experience the *toská* without any strictly defined cause; 'yearning' cannot stand as an independent, all-explaining ejaculation. We often are overtaken by *toská* when a well-balanced Englishman would simply refresh himself by giving way to a strong expression.'

Another trait well brought out by the same writer is the love of Russians for wide spaces *(prostór)* and freedom of movement. Such a passion for escape speaks in one of Fet's most stirring poems, called *The Hawk at Liberty:*

None came on dainty fare to rear you,
Or house you warm from winter's sting;
No careful hand was hourly near you
To pet you, or to deck your wing.

With crags beneath and skies around you,
A fledgling, on that mouldering oak,
You tested all the storms that found you
And battled with them as they broke.

Did hunger, heats, or tempests lash you?
Your puissant youth endured all these.
The risen sun could not abash you
Outfacing him across the seas.

But the hour comes, and you are ready;
You loose your pinions from the nest,
And fling them wide, and poise them steady,
And soon are launched on heaven's broad breast.

(*Evening Fires*, 2nd issue, No. vii.)

This love for a large horizon is more often conjoined not with motion or energy but with an extreme quietude of tone; as in the following sea-piece:

Expect to-morrow to be fair;
The martins flash, and raise their pipe;
The lucid west is lighted there
With one candescent purple stripe.

The boats are drowsing on the bay;
The pennant, scarcely fluttering, lies;
The sea recedes, and far away
Melts in the far receding skies.

So timidly the shades come on,
  So stealthily retires the light,
You cannot say the day is gone,
  You do not say, that there is night.

(*The Sea*, No. ii.)

IX

IN some of his poems Fet tells us more of himself, and his imagination takes a stronger sweep. The first example had best be given in prose; it has no title, but it might be headed *The Generations:*

'What an evening! the brook is full to bursting. How the nightingale is ringing out in that sunset!

The moon floods the fallows with its light from on high; in the gully are the gleam of water, shadow, and willows.

In the weir, it seems, there is an old leak; the planks are rotten, and you must not lean here upon the rail.

So it is, that everything in the springtime is alive. In the copse, in the field, everything must needs quiver and sing.

We shall fall silent, like those choirs in the bushes. Our children will come with a song on their lips.

But not only our children: our grandsons too shall pass by with a song; the selfsame notes shall descend to them, along with the spring.'

(*Evenings and Nights*, No. xiv.)

The tune is this, as in the third stanza:

Old and leaky looks the weir;
  Planks are failing;
At your peril lean you here
  On the railing.

Another meditation, written as late as 1890, is addressed *To the Stars that have Gone out:*

Curious eyes of those blue skiey spaces,
Tell me, how long shall your glimmer inspire me?
Long shall I feel, that in night's holy places
Nothing is nobler or fairer to fire me?

Quenched in some era forgotten, you may be
Nothing at all, though you still flame afar there;
—This dead man's songs to you flying, shall they be
The ghost of a sigh to the ghost of a star there?

(*Elegies and Thoughts*, No. lxxi.)

Some of Fet's early love poems are of great beauty, but I choose two that were written in old age. They have the qualities of youth as well. Such a strain as this is a relief from the kind of dualism that torments the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata:*

I hear the stern decree: I bow to what is fated;
Resistance, long ago, I told my heart was vain;
Yet, ere that sacrifice in tears be consummated,
Why must love utterly fall silent, and refrain?

Let censure pass unheard; enjoy, the hour is fleeting;
To-morrow's grim routine may be like yesterday's;
Meantime, prolong the kiss, the passionate glances meeting,
While hope with fiery dreams presumptuously plays.

(*Evening Fires*, 5th issue, No. viii.)

The next, perhaps the most solemn of Fet's poems, has in the original the finish of an inscription:

All, all that once was mine is mine for ever.
Time cannot fetter dreams. The spirit is free,
And, in its blissful visions, cannot sever
Young dreams from old; they all are one to me.

A ray of momentary hope flits wreathing
Beyond the dull fixed shores of everyday;
The spirit in the body's forge is seething,
Yet on her wandering wing still flies away.

No word of joy or freedom sounds to save me
  Yonder, where iron fate is lord of all.
Come hither! How shall Nature here enslave me
  When she herself is nothing but my thrall?

(*Elegies and Thoughts*, No. lxv.)

X

THE last lines to be quoted show Fet reverting to his natural gaiety. They are of a pleasantly mischievous kind and are dated 1856. He was then in Paris, soon to be married, with festivities which he describes in his memoir, to Maria Petrovna Botkina:

Forget me, madman, and forgo thy passion,
  And do not mar thy peace;
My image thy enamoured soul doth fashion;
  Let this delirium cease!

And, dreamer, one thing know, faint heart that fearest:
  Writhe as thou wilt and cry,
Just when thy air-spun dream is hovering nearest,
  Then, farthest off am I!

So, charmed by the moon's visage in the river,
  The child shrieks out for glee;
He plunges in; the troubled waters shiver,
  The silver features flee.

Thou infant, dry those tears that still are brimming,
  And let not dreams enthral;
There, up in heaven, the true bright moon is swimming;
  Here is no moon at all.

(*Melodies*, No. xxxvi.)

English Prose Numbers[1]

'ALL things,' says Aristotle, 'are determined by number.' He is speaking (*Rhetoric*, iii, 8) of Greek prose, which he says should have rhythm, but should not be metrical. The rhythm, however, should not be strict; it should only go a certain length. He then discusses the feet which please the ear in Greek prose, and their diverse effects. In Professor A. C. Clark's invaluable *Fontes Prosae Numerosae* (1909), a chain of Greek and Latin texts bearing on and illustrating the topic of prose rhythm, from Isocrates to Petrarch, is provided. The short preface anticipates Dr Clark's tract, *The Cursus in Mediaeval and Vulgar Latin* (1910), in which he sums up and carries further the inquiries, hitherto little known in England, of Zielinski and other foreign scholars. The *cursus*, it will presently be seen, signifies certain special cadences, or sequences of feet, which are favoured at the ending, or at certain places only less emphatic than the ending, of a sentence. These cadences, to be defined below, were transferred from quantitative to accentual Latin, and thence to early Modern English. In the *Church Quarterly Review* for April, 1912, Mr John Shelly broke fresh ground, by investigating this transference in the case of the Collects and of parts of the New Testament. His article is entitled *Rhythmical Prose in Latin and English*. These studies came to the notice of Professor Saintsbury while his *History of English Prose Rhythm* (1912) was in the press, and he refers to them in various notes then inserted. His book is the first history of the theme; it furnishes a multitude of scanned and commented examples, and of nice analyses and judgements. It is a history and a body of criticism rather than a theory; but

[1] The first version of this paper appeared in vol. iv of *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* (1913), collected by Dr Herford. It is here revised with some new paragraphs inserted in view of Mr Croll's article, and with a postscript upon a more general question.

the frequent remarks on theory are highly suggestive though often avowedly provisional. I find myself in general agreement with them, though with some reserves, and use a rather different notation. On June 6, 1913, Dr Clark gave a lecture, afterwards published, on *Prose Rhythm in English*. The inquiry is carried further in a suggestive paper by Mr Morris W. Croll, *The Cadence of English Oratorical Prose*, published in January, 1919, in *Studies in Philology*, vol. xvi, No. 1, pp. 1-55 (University of North Carolina). To this, as to the earlier contributions of Mr P. Fijn van Draat, I refer below. All these students together have opened new horizons. I make free use of their results, acknowledging details where it is possible, and trying to re-state the problems that now seem to arise.

The present essay, for clearness, is divided into five sections. Section I treats of the separate and *single feet* that constitute English prose, of their comparative frequency and import, and of their differing value to the ear. The sequences of these feet are almost disregarded in Section I. Section II treats of the *sequences of feet*, that are found at the endings of the English sentence, or at other emphatic pauses in it; the *cursus* are a particular case of such sequences. Section III is devoted to further aspects of the *cursus*. It will then seem that the results of Section I, and of Sections II-III are decidedly at cross purposes. Section IV is an attempt to explain this apparent difference, and to reconsider the *rhythmical relationship between verse and prose* in English. Section V is a postscript.

Some kindred questions are not discussed here at all. It will be assumed that 'accent' in English means energy or stress in the utterance; without considering its relations with pitch or quantity. Also I shall assume, what is not the case, that all accents are of equal energy and importance; marking, however, in many instances a subsidiary stress, by a grave accent. Some phoneticians use symbols to denote half a dozen degrees of emphasis, but this is hopeless in actual

prosody, if only because it enlarges the chances of disagreement as to a particular scansion. Professor Saintsbury, like many others, uses quantity-marks in scanning English, though he carefully avoids dogmatizing on the physics or physiology of the question. Accent-marks will be used here; but I must not be taken to think that accents alone constitute a foot. I incline to the opinion, that though English syllables cannot have a strict time-value, English feet cannot be defined, in the last resort, without regard to time. But this question concerns verse more than prose. Yet the names of the classical feet are here used, without prejudice, meaning groups defined by the place of the accent and the number of the syllables. Thus 'decáy' and 'distínct' and 'My Lórd' are all 'iambs,' 'rápidly' is a 'dactyl,' and so on: this usage is now familiar, and will, it is hoped, become clear to any non-classical reader as we proceed. (If neutral, non-committal terms are desired, the best are 'weak' and 'strong.') Lastly, I shall not here discuss what is bad prose rhythm,—a large subject; the examples will all be of the other kind; but some of the conditions of excellent rhythm may become clearer on the way.

I. SINGLE FEET

1. An English prose sentence, for the present purpose, consist of a number of *feet*, or groups of words, containing at least one accent in each foot, but sometimes two accents. In verse the feet may and constantly do cut across the words ('My bós|om's lórd'). In prose the foot, as here defined, must begin with the beginning and end with the end of a word, though not necessarily of the same word; the prose feet would be 'my bósom's | lórd,' amphibrach and monosyllable. I see that Professor Saintsbury sometimes cuts the words in scanning prose. Cut they really may be in the utterance; but in Section III, I shall plead that this is due, not to the true prose-rhythm, but to the verse-rhythm intruding, and justly intruding. Meantime let it pass that the foot-unit

in prose is made up of one or more entire words. Most of the feet that are common in our prose are to be heard in this sentence from Coleridge:

'Whát | is Greéce | at this présent | móment |? It is the cóuntry | of the héroes | from Códrus | to Phìlopóemen |; and só | it wóuld be |, though áll | the sánds | of África | should cóver | its córnfièlds | and ólive-gàrdens |, and not a flówer | were léft | on Hyméttus | for a beé | to múrmur in.'

Here there are five iambs ('is Greéce'); four amphibrachs, —feet which Mr Bridges, owing to their frequency, calls 'britannics' ('from Códrus'; 'its córnfields,' which is almost an 'antibacchic,' like 'and táll córn'); and one anapaest ('for a beé.') The 'paeon' is a four-syllabled foot with one accent; three types are represented, namely two 'second paeons,' accented on the second ('of África'); three 'third paeons' ('at this présent,' 'on Hyméttus.') There is one fourth paeon ('and not a flówer.') There are three five-syllabled feet; these (called by Professor Saintsbury 'dochmiacs') may conveniently be thought of as cases of one or other paeon with a light syllable for preface ('It is the coúntry,' 'to Phìlopoémen.')[1] There is but one trochee ('móment'), and one monosyllabic foot, the first.

Now some of these features, such as the frequency of iamb and amphibrach, will be found to be features of English prose at large, whilst others, such as the relative abundance of paeons and five-syllabled groups, belong more to a special type of prose, the numerous, the periodic, the Latinized. The chief feet not figuring in this short passage of twenty-one groups are: the spondee ('Jóhn Jónes', 'whíte róse'); the rarer 'molossus' ('Jóhn Jámes Jónes', púre whíte róse'); the somewhat rare first paeon ('édifices') and the commoner

[1] 'Epitrites,' or four-syllabled feet with three accents, seem nearly always to break up into two feet, 'and Jóhn Jónes díed', 'bléss his deár heárt'; I have therefore seldom regarded them.

dactyl ('glórious'); and some less usual combinations of four- and five-syllabled feet, of which examples will appear.

2. There are four *types* of rhythm, irrespective of the number of syllables in the foot. These are:

(*a*) *Rising* rhythm. This, as here defined, begins on an unaccented syllable, ends on an accented one, and only contains one accent. Such feet are iamb, anapaest, fourth paeon. More light syllables are possible ('and ĭf it were só'). Even here a second stress begins to be set up on 'ĭf'. But, in this and in all the types, the genius of English is against having more than three unaccented syllables running.

(*b*) *Falling* rhythm. This begins on an accent, and has one or more unaccented syllables following, as in trochee, dactyl, first paeon. After this limit, the tendency to set up new stresses is heard, e.g. in such a hideous word as 'éxtra-tèrritóriality'.

(*c*) *Waved* rhythm, consisting of three syllables at least, begins and also ends on an unaccented syllable; accent occurs somewhere between. The amphibrach ('británnic'), the second and third paeons, and their extensions, are in waved rhythm. This is the most distinctive type of rhythm in prose as compared with verse, where its occurrence is doubtful. Also it admits of longer feet, for the reason given, than the two preceding types; for the accent coming midway allows of prolongation at either end. Burke has: 'as ĭf it were in the gámbols | of a bóyish | unlúckiness,' in his hurried eloquence. But this must almost mark the limit.

(*d*) *Level* rhythm. Here the foot is wholly made up of accents, as in the monosyllabic foot, spondee, and molossus. The limit of length is less than in the other three types, for the ear will hardly bear even three consecutive accents without forming a new foot. Level and waved rhythm combine in the 'bacchic' ('foúr ónly'), and in the 'antibacchic' ('the Lórd Gód'). These tend to split into two feet, but they need not do so; it is a question for the particular reader. The same remark is of course true of many other combinations.

People cut up sentences in different ways, and variously at different times. 'Lórd of the Ísles' could be cut in four ways, monosyllable and anapaest, trochee and iamb, dactyl and monosyllable; and it could be called a choriambic foot (´ · · ´). My own ear cuts the phrase thus: 'Lórd | of the Ísles,' simply because the last three words are grammatically one group. Granting such a principle, such variations would not count much in the long run, and ought not much to affect the figures soon to be given.

3. The four types differ much in *frequency*, *import*, *and emphasis*. Dr Clark (*Prose Rhythm in English*, p. 18) speaks of the 'trochaic movement as pervading the whole sentence' in English. This, as I shall suggest in Section III, is partly true if we think of the 'cadence,' but not true if we think of the 'foot-scansion,' i.e. of the prose feet as made up of entire words. Rising and waved rhythms are the working types of foot for English prose. In other words, the great majority of feet do not begin with an accent. This will appear from the statistics, and it is also what we should expect in a language where articles precede nouns and pronouns verbs, and where light conjunctions or particles so often begin a clause. The iamb is the commonest foot (as in Greek); and the anapaest and amphibrach are commoner than the longer feet of the same character.

Falling rhythm is rarer than rising or waved. Trochee, dactyl, &c., therefore arrest the ear at once, and also arrest the pace, and exist in order to do so. Level rhythm is rarer still. Spondees and monosyllables arrest the ear and the pace still more, and exist in order to do so. The force of falling rhythm in the midst of waved is at once felt in this:

> 'But the iníquity | of oblívion | *blíndly* | *scáttereth* | her póppy'; and of level and falling rhythm succeeded by iambs and amphibrach in this of Newman's: 'Spríng |, súmmer |, aútumn |, eách | in túrn |, have broúght | their gífts | and dóne | their útmost.'

These are the main principles, as regards the single feet. Disregarding sequences at present, can we get any further by mere counting? Can we thus throw light on the special rhythm, the distinctive beauty or pleasure, furnished by different writers or by different sorts of prose? Professor Saintsbury's *History* is one long effort to discriminate such effects and to find words for them. He has much that is new to teach, and he will sharpen many impressions that were dim before, if indeed they were present to us at all. I have put the matter in more scholastic and positive form, and am not always sure how far our conclusions are the same (see his Appendix III, a provisional statement of 'axioms, inferences, and suggestions'). To bear out mine, I now quote three long passages, one from Gibbon, one from De Quincey, and one from a later master. The favouritism of these authors in the matter of feet will reveal something; it will be seen more definitely that their variations are 'not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion.' The first passage is from chap. lxxi of *The Decline and Fall*. The reader will please to neglect at first the Roman numerals set in brackets, and to turn back to them if he ever reaches Section II; for these numerals indicate the classically-descended sequences, or *cursus*. It should be noted, however, that the scansion marked in this passage is that of the single feet, *not* of the *cursus*, which may cut across the words.

'The árt | of mán[1] | is áble | to constrúct | mónuments | fár móre | pérmanent (? iv) | than the nárrow | spán | of his ówn | exístence (iii) |; yét thése | mónuments |, líke himsélf |, are périshable | and fraíl |; and, in the boúndless | ánnals | of tíme |, his lífe | and his lábours (i) | must

[1] In these extracts I forbear, for simplicity's sake, to mark—what of course we hear, and what would be noted in a fuller analysis—the stronger pauses at the end of each grammatical group which includes two or more feet: e.g. the first four words, and the following five.

équally | be meásured (i^2) | as a fleéting | móment. | Of a símple | and sólid | édifice (iv), | it is not eásy, | howéver (i), | to circumscríbe | the durátion (i) |. As the wónders | of áncient | dáys, | the pýramids | attrácted (i^2) | the cùriósity | of the áncients: | an húndred | gènerátions (i^2) |, the leáves | of aútumn |, have drópped | into the gráve; | and, áfter | the fáll | of the Pháraohs | and Ptólemies (ii), | the Caésars | and Cáliphs (i), | the sáme | pýramids | stánd | eréct | and únsháken (? i) | above the floóds | of the Níle. . . . | Fíre | is the mòst pówerful | ágent | of lífe | and deáth; | the rápid | míschief | may be kíndled | and própagàted (iii?) | by the índustry | or négligence (ii^2) | of mánkínd; | and évery | périod | of the Róman | annals | is márked | by the rèpetítion | of símilar | calámities (ii^2). | A mémorable | cónflagrátion, | the guílt | or misfórtune (i) | of Néro's | reígn, | contínued, | thoùgh with unéqual | fúry (? iii) | either síx | or níne | dáys. | Innúmerable | buíldings (i^2) | crówded | in clóse | and crooked | streéts, | supplíed | perpétual | fúel (i) | for the flámes |; and, whén | they ceáse, | foúr ónly | of the foúrtéen | régions | were léft | entíre; | threé | were tótally | destróyed, | and séven | were defórmed | by the rélics | of smóking (i) | and láceràted | édifices. | In the fúll | meridian | of émpire (i^2), | the metrópolis | aróse | with frésh | beaúty | from her áshes (i^2) |; yet the mémory | of the óld | deplóred | their irréparable | lósses (i^2), | the árts | of Greéce, | the tróphies | of víctory (ii), | the mónuments | of prímitive | or fábulous | antíquity (ii^2).'

Here there are 137 feet. Of these 27, or nearly one-fifth, are iambs: this proportion is probably not above the average for English prose. There are eight anapaests, but 21 amphibrachs; this always common foot is much favoured by Gibbon. He has few level rhythms—only two spondees, and eight monosyllabic feet ('spán,' 'dáys,' 'fíre,' 'reígn,' &c., all emphatic); but more falling rhythms—twelve trochees, six dactyls, one first paeon ('édifices'). There are

three cases of the rarer trisyllabic feet; one doubtful cretic, 'líke himsélf'; one bacchic, 'foúr ónly'; one antibacchic, 'of mánkínd,' which approaches an anapaest ('of mànkínd'). This accounts for all the feet, 87 in number, of less than four syllables. Fifty are left, consisting of four or more syllables. It needs no prosodist to tell us that Gibbon loves these polysyllabic groups, but the analysis yields something further.

Some of the rarer feet of four syllables are just represented. There is one double trochee, 'cónflagrátion'; one 'antispast,' 'and únsháken,' almost a third paeon, 'and ùnsháken'; and one (?) 'ionic a minore,' 'of the foúrteén.' The remaining feet of four, five, and six may be resolved into the various paeons or into extensions of them, which, as remarked before, may be described as one or other form of the paeon, preceded by one or more extra light syllables. Gibbon is fond of a first paeon thus prefaced; there are six examples, such as 'a mémorable,' 'innúmerable.' In two of these, 'and própagàted,' 'and láceràted,' a second stress begins to be set up. The fourth paeon is rare, there are two cases: 'into the gráve,' and 'abòve the floóds' to which may be added 'to circumscríbe.' It is rare, because, as noticed above, the English ear dislikes a run of many unaccented syllables in a foot; in all these three instances a second stress struggles to be heard. Gibbon, however, positively revels in second paeons ('the pýramids'), and in extensions of them like 'the metrópolis' (a longer one is 'the cùriósity'); these taken together come to eighteen. Third paeons are equally favoured; and also their extensions, of which 'and in the boúndless' is one kind, and 'by the rèpetítion' another. The sum here is nineteen. The last sentence closes on four paeonic movements running: 'the mónuments | of a prímitive | or fábulous | antíquity.'[1]

[1] In the first 73 feet at the opening of Chap. xxxvi of the *Decline and Fall*, the second and third paeons, with their extensions, number together thirty-one. There are fourteen iambs, six amphibrachs, seven anapaests, and six trochees.

The reader must bear with a little more arithmetic presently. What is the aesthetic effect of such a rhythm? It is in long-little broken undulations; the tide is neither fast nor slow: the movement is the right one for Gibbon's task, and carries him easily over the centuries. It shows its pattern, but it is *not* 'monotonous.' There is a due measure of salience, of little arrests and cunning stresses, in the carefully spaced trochees, dactyls, and monosyllabic feet; and these come often upon the dignified words, 'pérmanent', 'mónuments,' 'édifice,' 'pýramid,' 'ánnals,' 'spán,' 'reígn'—impersonal words, making for space and grandeur, not for passion, unless it be a certain large, diffused intellectual passion. Such a prose needs no violence; it recites itself, and carries its own emphasis. It might be uttered aloud in the Capitol, where Gibbon conceived his *Decline and Fall*, 'while the bárefoòted | fríars | were sínging | véspers | in the témple | of Júpiter.'

In the passage now to be quoted from De Quincey (*The Affliction of Childhood*) the rhythm is audibly more intricate and varied. There are more pauses, arrests, and reversed accents, and more feet[1] of an unusual sort: 'while thís túmult' (antispast), 'upon thóse cloúds' (antibacchic), 'the tótal stórm' (double iamb); and, of the longer groups, 'of my sórrow-haúnted' (double trochee prefaced by two light syllables), 'the tràns figurátions', and 'under intólerable,' are examples. In general, the feet are shorter than in the Gibbon passage; the proportion[2] of those under four syl-

[1] Of course these may usually be resolved; it is a matter of ear and rhetoric whether we divide 'upon thóse | cloúds,' 'the tótal | stórm'; but the effect differs, and the difference matters.

[2] In a footnote, I may perhaps profane this passage with percentages, for the sake of a comparison with Gibbon.

	Gibbon (137 feet) %	De Quincey 200 feet) %
Feet of less than four syllables . . .	63·5	72

lables is larger, and the paeons are fewer, though often splendid in their effect. And the difference is made up chiefly in trochees, dactyls, and above all in monosyllabic feet, of which the percentage is much greater in De Quincey. These emphatic notes come often upon lofty, coloured, and poetic words, and the number is raised partly by deliberate repetition: 'thére,' 'Gód,' 'slówly'; others, not repeated, are 'súddenly,' 'túmult,' dy̆ing | chíldren,' 'pángs,' 'fiérce.' In De Quincey we begin to feel how the monosyllables win their foot-value, as in verse, either from being prolonged in the utterance, or from being helped out by rests and silences. But the true harmonies of such a passage can only be felt when we return to it in Sec. II, and consider the sequences and combined cadences.

'Thére | were the apostles that had trampled upon earth, and the glories of earth, out of celestial love to man. | Thére | were the martyrs that had borne witness to the truth through flames, through torments, and through armies of fierce, insulting faces. | Thére | were the saínts, | whó | ùnder intólerable | pángs, | had glórified | Gód | by meek submission to his will. And all the time, while this tumult of sublime memorials | héld ón | as the deép chórds | from some accómpaniment | in the báss |, I saw, through

	Gibbon (137 feet) %	De Quincey (200 feet) %
Feet of four or more	36·5	28
Iambs	19·7	20
Amphibrachs	15·3	12·5
Anapaests	5·8	9·5
Trochees	8·8	12·5
Monosyllables	5·8	13
Second and third paeons with extensions	27	19·5

This contrast of Gibbon with De Quincey was suggested by a passage in Mr Shelly's article; where he is referring, however, to the cadences, not to the 'foot-scansion.'

the wide | céntral | fiéld | of the window, where the glass | was úncóloured |, whíte | fleécy | cloúds | sáiling | over the azure depth of the sky; were it but a fragment or a hint of such a cloud, immediately, under the flash | of my sórrow-haúnted éye, | it grew and shaped itself into visions of beds with white, lawny curtains; | and in the béds | láy | sick chíldren |, dying | children |, that were tossing in anguish, and weeping | clámorously | for death. Gód |, for some mysterious reason, could not suddenly release them from their pain; but he suffered the beds, as it seemed, to rise | slowly |, through the clouds; | slówly | the beds ascended into the chambers of the air; | slówly | álso | his arms descended from the heavens, that he and his young children, whom in Pálestine | once and for ever he had blessed, | though they must páss | slówly | through the dreádful | chásm | of sèparátion |, might yet meet the sooner. These visions | were sélf-sustaíned |. These visions needed not that any sound should speak to me, or music mould my feelings. The hint | from the lítany |, the fragment from the clouds,—those and the storied windows were sufficient. But not the less the blare | of the tumúltuous | órgan | wroúght | its own separate creations. | And óftentímes | in anthems, when the mighty instrument threw its vast columns of sound, | fiérce | yet melódious |, over the voices of the choir,—high in arches, when it seemed to rise, surmounting and overriding the strife of the vocal parts, and gathering by strong coercion | the tótal stórm | into únity |,—sometimes I seemed to rise and walk triumphantly | upon thóse | cloúds, | whích |, but a moment before, I had looked up to as mementos of prostrate sorrow: yes, sometimes, under | the tránsfigurátions | of music, felt of grief itself as of a fiery chariot for mounting | victóriously | above the causes of grief.'

Lastly may be quoted the passage from the later master, a passage of slow, seemingly gentle description, punctuated

with many monosyllabic groups, level movements, and trochaic arrests, which mark the changes of pace in the stroll that is narrated. The incident is nothing in itself; but the pace alters in obedience to a suppressed tragic feeling, which is present to the readers of *The Golden Bowl*. Some of the effects are broken and conversational—('at ány | cóst | as it wère'); but the spots of intenser colour, the bursts of louder emphasis, are marked in the rhythm; and the smoother, swifter steps of the couple are indicated in little runs of wavy feet. All this reflects the impression, it is not fanciful to think, of surface quiet and real tension. There are 157 feet in all. As I read the passage, these contain seventeen isolated monosyllables,—'old,' 'oak,' 'sun,' &c., all pictorial or imaginative. The one clause that lets us into the underlying gravity of the affair is very marked in cadence: 'if they hádn't | beén | réally | toó | sérious' |; a rare sequence, third paeon, monosyllable, trochee, monosyllable, dactyl. There are antibacchics like 'and sháped yéw,' 'of bríck wáll,' which easily run off into smooth and lovely combinations, like: 'and had túrned | at ónce | to púrple | and to pínk |.' Another might have written 'to púrple | and pínk |'; not so Mr Henry James.

'What was now clear, at all events, | for the fáther | and the dáughter |, was their simply knowing they wanted, for the time, to | be togéther— | at ány cost |, as it wère |; and their necessity so worked in them as to bear them out of the house, in a quarter hidden from that in which their friends were gathered, | and caúse them | to wánder |, unseén |, unfóllowed |, along a covered walk in the "old" garden, as it was called, | óld | with an antíquity | of formal | things |, hígh bóx | and sháped yéw | and expánses | of bríck wáll | that had turned at once to purple and to pink. They went out of a door in the wall, a door that had a slab with a date set above it, 1713, but in the old multiplied lettering, and then | had before them | a smáll | white gáte,

| intènsely whíte | and clean amid all the greenness, through which they gradually passed to where some of the grandest | treés | spáciously | clústered | and where they would find one of the quietest places. A bench had been placed, long ago, beneath a great oak that helped to crown a mild eminence, and the ground sank away below it, to rise again, opposite, at a distance sufficient to enclose the solitude | and fígure | a bósky | horízon|. Súmmer |, blíssfully |, was wíth them | yét, | and the lów | sún | máde a splash of light where it pierced the looser shade; Maggie, coming down to go out, had brought a parasol, which, | as óver | her chárming | báre heád |, she nów | hándled it |, gáve |, with the bíg | stráw hát | that her father in these days always wore a good deal tipped back, definite intention to their walk. They knew the bench; it was "sequestered"—they had praised it for that together, before, and liked the word; and after they had begun to linger there they could have smiled | (if they hádn't | beén |, réally |, tóo | sérious |, and if the question hadn't so soon ceased to matter), over the probable wonder of the others | as to whát | would have become of them.'

II. THE CURSUS

The student, by finding his own examples, or by using those given in the *History of English Prose Rhythm*, can pursue such a line of inquiry without limit, and can check these suggestions as to the relative frequency and differing significance of the feet. He will learn the rhythmical habits of many writers; one thing he will never learn, a recipe for the production of beautiful effects. But his ear may be made more sensitive by the discipline. It is time to turn to the *cursus*. This is a name for certain sequences of feet, which come in emphatic places and are used because they are thought to be more beautiful and effective than others. They are an effort to bring, not indeed any actual metre, but the metrical principle, into prose; they are meant to recur, not at fixed

intervals, but with fixed limits of internal variation, and to give the pleasure of law and order thereby. Professor Saintsbury, while holding to the principle of variety as the foundation of our prose rhythm, notes, especially in his Appendix III, some habits of rhythmical sequence which seem specially grateful or the reverse. These hints are offered as 'strictly provisional,' but they merit a closer investigation than can be given here. One principle approved is that of 'gradation,' 'either way, from longer to shorter, or from shorter to longer.' For example, there seems to be harmony in a sequence of 'dochmiac,' paeon, trisyllable, or in one of anapaest, iamb, monosyllable. A parallel sequence, from our extract from Gibbon, is this: 'As the wónders | of áncient | dáys'; another is: 'either síx | or níne | dáys.' So in Newman: 'but they are óver, | and the énd | is cóme.' So in De Quincey: 'yet melódious |, over the voíces | of the choír |'; 'as meméntos | of próstrate | sórrow.' So in Henry James: 'sánk | awáy | belów it | to ríse agáin |'; this is 'from shorter to longer.' Saintsbury also suggests that 'amphibrach, bacchic or antibacchic, and anapaest, seem in many cases to combine with special harmony'; thus in our last passage we have 'expánses | of bríck wáll | that had túrned.' My own impression is that this is very true, but that the happy combinations are almost infinite, especially if we look at the body of the sentence, or at the beginning. Mr Croll, as will be seen below, seeks to formulate the widest and most general rules of English cadence. But he starts from the *cursus*, and it is easier to define the range of effects by first keeping to the *cursus*.

The *cursus* is the sequence of two or three feet which precedes a pause. The most marked pauses come at the end of a completed grammatical sentence; those next in emphasis are heard before a minor point (comma, semicolon); and there are shorter groups still, which are marked off by the ear, and which may or may not coincide with grammatical sub-groups or *commata*. The *cursus*, as Dr Clark and Mr Croll explain with great fullness of learning, go back to

certain Greek and Latin writers of 'numerous' prose, and especially to some of the orators. Dr Clark relates the astonishing history of their persistence through post-classical times, and in mediaeval and vulgar Latin; and then their transference from accentual Latin to early Modern English. He goes on to inquire, in his tract *Prose Rhythm in English*, into the extent of their sway over later English; and institutes a search for those cadences which are of native source and are *not* classically descended. Mr Shelly had already entered on the same quest, especially in respect of liturgical and biblical English, and Mr Croll carries such analysis very much farther.

There are three or four types of classically descended *cursus*. The base of them all was a cretic –∪–; this was the first of the two or three feet that made up the sequence. The cretic was followed either by a trochee, or by another cretic, or by two trochees; the last syllable of the whole being treated as 'doubtful.' In a fourth form the cretic was followed by a trochee and dactyl. These were minor variations, to be noted presently. In time accent took the place of quantity. I append the four types with their main variations, as described by Dr Clark and Mr Croll, drawing examples freely from the pages of the former and also from the passages from Gibbon, De Quincey and Henry James; stating in each case (α) the classical cadence, (β) the cadence in accentual Latin, (γ) the same in English.

i. (α) *vōcĕ tēs|tatŭr.* (β) *ád te missúrum, láctes bibérunt.* (γ) 'sérvants de|párted,' 'tóssing in ánguish,' '(circum)-scríbe the du|rátion,' 'quíetest pláces.' This is the *cursus planus*; in English, dactyl and trochee.[1]

i[2]. The last syllable of the cretic is resolved into two shorts, –∪∪∪– and the last of the accentual dactyl (though

[1] The *planus* is common; and the remark (Saintsbury, *History*, p. 481) that 'the "hexameter" ending, in verse and prose alike, is repugnant to English,' requires further discussion. It must be justified, if at all, on the principle noted below in Section III, i.e., as applying to the foot-scansion, not to the cadence.

light already) into two light syllables accordingly. (α) *ēssĕ vĭdĕ|ātŭr.* (β) *mála nocuísset.* (γ) 'brightness of thy | rising', 'windows were sufficient' (De Quincey), '(ir)réparable lósses.' This then is a first paeon plus a trochee.

ii. (α) *nōstră cū|rātĭō.* (β) *méa curátio.* (γ) 'hint from the lítany,' 'múltiplied léttering.' This is the *cursus tardus*, in English two dactyls.

ii². Cretic resolved as in i². (α) *ēssĕ vĭdĕ|āmĭnī.* (β) *míssae celebrátio.* (γ) 'súmmits and de|clívities,' 'símilar ca|lámities,' 'whát would have be|cóme of them.' In English, first paeon plus dactyl.

iii. (α) *flūmĭnūm quāe tĕnētĭs.* (β) *saepe religiósos.* (γ) 'glórious ùnder|táking,' 'cleán amid | áll the | greénness,' 'spán of his | ówn ex|ístence.' This is the *cursus velox*, which becomes an accentual dactyl plus two accentual trochees. Here the accent on the first trochee tends often to become secondary, as in 'glórious | ùnder|taking.'

iii². Dactyl prolonged into first paeon. According to Mr Croll (p. 11), not recognized in the theory or practice of mediaeval Latin; 'weákness of our | mórtal | náture.' So Macaulay: 'daúghters of the | hoúse of | Brúnswick.'

iv. A form is also recognized, which is iii plus an extra syllable. (α) *spīrĭtūm pērtĭmēscĕrĕ.* (β) (*amari*)*túdinem pèniténtiae* (Dante). (γ) 'Símple and | sólid | édifice'.

Mr Croll (p. 2) adds a 'trispondaic' form, namely, *velox* plus one or more extra trochees: (β) (*err*)*ántium | córda | résī | píscant'* (γ) 'páss to our | jóyful résur|réction.'

Dr Clark takes a number of passages of English prose, and marks off the sections, laying especial stress on the ends of clauses and periods, and noting where these *clausulae* occur. The Authorized Version, Sir Thomas Browne, the Prayer Book, Gibbon, De Quincey, Landor and Carlyle are cited. There remains no doubt that (1) the *cursus* are amongst the cadences that have taken root in English; (2) that this is partly because of their classic origin; (3) that there are a great number of other cadences, utterly dissimilar

to these, and equally rooted in English; (4) that these latter cadences, by a process of exhaustion, may be described as 'native'; (5) that no one has yet gone far with the classification of the native cadences, or has shown whether or not it is possible to make one—to make one, that is, not merely by applying the laws of permutations and combinations, but on some aesthetic principle, as disclosed by the best habits of the best writers.

To see the nature of the task, we may return to our three passages. It is clear that all the classic *cursus* end on a light syllable; but that by no means all cadences that so end can be fitted into these *cursus*. In the Gibbon passage above are marked all the cases that I can find of any one of the *cursus* —occurring, that is, at the end of any marked group, and not necessarily at the end of a clause or period. There are eight of i (the *planus*), and eight of i^2, and only eight of the *tardus* and the *velox* taken together. These 24 form a small ratio of the total group-cadences; the sum of which, owing to different ways of reading, can hardly be given precisely. But it is plain that, fond as Gibbon is of i ('guílt or misfór-tune,' and of i^2 ('(me)ridian of émpire'), and also of ii^2 ('índustry or négligence'), he is at least as fond of 'native' cadences, especially of those that end upon an accent ('of mánkind,' 'were léft entíre,' &c.). These, I think, were first indicated by Mr Shelly; with Dr Clark, we may call them 'native,' on the principle of elimination. Other native cadences are those which end on an unaccented, but do *not* conform to the *cursus* (e.g. 'yet thése mónuments.') Now the proportion of classical[1] to native cadences varies mark-

[1] I should not say that 'shíne, for thy líght is cóme' is in form ii (*tardus*). Clark (*Prose Rhythm*, p. 11) seems so to scan it, on the ground that the last syllable in the quantitative sequence was *anceps*; but it does not follow that in the *cursus* it can be accentually *anceps*. The accented ending is alien to the principle of the *cursus*. Similarly, I should demur to describing '(per)suásive than thóse of Fox himsélf' as form iv, and 'órdinary níght or dáy' as form ii^2.

edly in different writers (see Clark, *Prose Rhythm*, pp. 12, 17); but it seems certain that both kinds are always present, and that the native usually tend to outnumber the classical forms. What, then, *are* the native forms?

One caution is here needful. The *cursus* need not begin with a word, they may equally well begin with an accent in the midst of a word: ('in)numerable buildings.' This cuts across the 'foot-scansion' laid down in Section I. In Section III the discrepancy will be discussed. But are we to take the native cadences also as free to begin in the middle of a word, —upon an accent *there?* If so, we shall cut again across the foot-scansion. I shall, however, assume this freedom, and suggest its significance later. But the further result is that the *actual feet* will often be different, according as we are thinking of them singly for the purpose of the foot-scansion, or together for the cadence. Thus '(the) guílt or misfór-tune' is for the *scansion* iamb plus third paeon, but for the *cadence* it is dactyl plus trochee; and 'spán of his ówn exíst-ence' is for the scansion monosyllable, anapaest, amphi-brach, while for the cadence it is dactyl, trochee, trochee. This makes a confusion; there seem to be two notations for the same thing; but it is a confusion which expresses a con-fused reality; it is not the 'same thing'; and the essence of the matter is that we do hear both notations at once. Mean-time, once more, what are the native cadences?

They are not only far more numerous in occurrence, but far more various in type, than those of classic parentage. I can barely begin to indicate their variety. Let it suffice (1) to take only those ending upon an accent,[1] and only those con-taining two, not more, feet. Let the words be cut freely. Let the first foot always begin on an accent. Thus we get three main types, represented by 'lóve to mán,' 'glóries of eárth,' and 'trámpled upon eárth,' according as there are one, two, or three light syllables between the two accents; to which may be added the case where there are none, as in 'thóse

[1] (1) ii (2) ixi (3) ixxi (4) ixxxi are the main types.

cloúds.' More light syllables intervening are rarer, but occur: '(ac)cómpaniment in the báss.' This makes some five orders to begin with. Now (2) take forms that do end on a light syllable, but not after the classical pattern. This gives at once five or six orders more, such as: '(in)súlting fáces'; '(sub)líme memórials'; 'úncóloured'; '-sélf are périshable'; 'míld éminence'; such are the chief. Now these eleven orders are made out of sequences of two feet only. It is clear that if the combinations of three feet are considered, the number becomes hardly manageable. All these native cadences, in each of our three passages, will be found interspersed with the classical cadences, which yet are less numerous. To show this, one of De Quincey's sentences may be repeated, neglecting now the single feet, and considering only the sequences; the classical sequences are printed in italics, the native ones marked off by double bars at either end.

> 'And *óftentìmes in* | *ánthems* (i^2), when the ‖míghty ínstrument‖ ‖thréw its vást‖ ‖cólumns of soúnd‖, *fiérce yet me*|*lódious* (ii), over the ‖voíces of the choír‖, ‖hígh in árches‖, when it ‖seémed to ríse‖, sur|*moúnting and* | *óver*|*ríding* (iii) the ‖strífe of the vócal párts‖, and *gáthering by* ‖*stróng coércion* (iii^2) ‖ the tótal *stórm into* | *únity* (ii), sometimes I ‖seémed to ríse‖ and ‖wálk triúmphantly‖ upon ‖thóse clóuds‖, which, but a ‖móment befóre‖, I had looked up to as me*méntos of próstràte* | *sórrow*' (iii).

From such a sentence it clear how the native cadences, taking only two feet into account, tend to fall either into the types spondee, cretic, choriamb, or into the types ditrochee, trochee-dactyl, monosyllable-dactyl, &c. Taking groups of three feet into account, and looking back at the entire De Quincey passage, many sequences of singular beauty are at once audible; the following are but a few of them: 'meék submíssion to his wíll'; 'ázure dépth of the ský'; 'frágment or a hínt of such a clóud'; 'weéping clámorously for deáth'; '(as)cénded into the chámbers of the aír'; and, with a light

ending, 'fiérce, insúlting fáces'; '(it)sélf as of a fiéry chárior'; 'hé and his yoúng chíldren'; 'ríse and wálk triúmphantly.' The ear soon picks out the two-foot native cadences, as easily as it does the classical *cursus*; but a long self-training, which I do not pretend to have undergone, would be needed to pick out the native three-foot ones. I must now digress awhile, in order to pay due respect to Mr Croll and Mr Fijn van Draat.

III. THE CURSUS *continued.*

NO rapid *compte rendu* would be fair to Mr Croll's paper, but I will state what I think are some of his best points, and also where I part company with him. Mr Shelly has been through the Collects of the 1549 Prayer Book, those for Sundays being mostly based upon the Latin, and those for Holy Days being mostly new; and, counting in his own way, had found that in the whole body of the Collects about half the cadences, or endings of clauses, were in one form or other of the *cursus*, whilst in the Sunday Collects the ratio was much larger. Mr Croll, counting otherwise, criticizes these figures, and, indeed, neither he nor I can agree with some of Mr Shelly's scansions. But no two persons count or scan such things quite alike, and Mr Shelly's pioneering work retains its value; nor do the actual figures greatly affect the argument. It is plain that there is a very remarkable proportion of *cursus* in these compositions. But Mr Croll shows, what we should expect, that those who built the English Collects upon the Latin were at no pains to insert the same *cursus* in just the same places. 'We must suppose a general, purely aural, and in some degree unconscious influence' (Croll, p. 7). Thus English cadencing is much freer than Latin, even when founded upon it; and hence arise some common and beautiful varieties, like iii^2, which are not found in the Latin. Mr Croll also shows how English, owing to its analytical make-up, is apt to desert some of the finer Latin usages, which depend on minor or secondary accent;

such as a quadrisyllable, where the stress on the first trochee is a minor one: *víderint còrvalescant* (Croll, p. 13). I cannot go far with Mr Croll when he traces these minor accents in English; they depend too much on individual ear.

In any case all this makes the English *cursus* an elastic thing. It can be heard, it must be heard, not merely at the end of sentences or of their constituent groups (*commata*), but in the middle; and in this way it often interlaces and overlaps with the final *cursus*, which may be present also. Mr Croll shows this clearly by his comparison of certain Collects, clause by clause, with their Latin; and also by his examples from Gibbon, which seem to work out somewhat as in my quotation on page 136 *supra*. *Cursus* that do not come in the orthodox place he calls 'unitary phrases' (pp. 32 sqq.); and he uses throughout a handy notation, marking the accent by the number of the syllable on which it falls, and counting these numbers backwards (thus *tardus* is '6—3,' *planus* '5—2,' and so following). The English *cursus*, then, is not pinned down to fixed positions, but is pervasive and omnipresent, and varies in its distribution from writer to writer, and helps to give each writer his rhythmical personality.

Mr Croll then proceeds (pp. 41 sqq.) to stretch the elastic further; until, I fear, it snaps. We may accept as fair some of his extensions of the Latin formulæ. For instance, in the *velox*, form iii^2, it does not cost much to slip an extra light syllable into the middle member, the first trochee, and so turn it into a dactyl; and some very stately cadences are the result, such as 'íssue out of | áll their aff|líctions'; or this may stretch out, again, into a paeon, as in 'reáson of the | fraílty of our | náture.' But I submit that it costs a good deal more, and destroys the *cursus* effect altogether, to *curtail* a trochee into a monosyllable, and to cite passages where this effect occurs as *derived* from the *cursus* in point of fact. Thus 'líving and | trúth,' dactyl and monosyllable, is represented as a 'departure from the Latin form of *velox*,' which yet

'keeps its essential character.' In the same way the sequence 'thing which we | ásk | faithfully' is called another such departure: dactyl, monosyllable, dactyl.

Now are these sequences varieties of the *cursus* at all? Surely not. And did the *cursus* itself make its first appearance in English under Latin influence? Again, surely not. The Latin influence may well have greatly strengthened its hold, and I believe did so. Here pertains an instructive article by Mr P. Fijn van Draat, entitled *Voluptas Aurium*, dated from Utrecht in February 1914, and printed in *Englische Studien*, 1914-5 (vol. xlviii, pp.394-428). The same scholar also published a paper on *The Cursus in Old English Poetry* in *Anglia*, 1914 (vol. xxxviii, pp. 377-404); as well as earlier articles on kindred subjects, in the same journal (e. g. vol. xxxvi, pp. 1-58, 1912: *Rhythm in English Prose*). Now Mr van Draat easily finds examples not only of the *cursus*, but of the cadences that I call 'native' (he uses the term differently), throughout all English prose (not to name verse) from the time of Alfred until now. And he asks himself, naturally, how far is the presence of the *cursus* due to the conscious following of classical practice? As he remarks, when a child says 'give me an apple,' the *cursus planus* is employed. And he proves, I think, to the hilt that all, or nearly all, our cadences, whether *cursus* or not, are indigenous. And indeed the mere laws of permutation almost compel them to be so, in a heavily stressed tongue like ours, where only a limited number of arrangements *can* occur for small groups of accented syllables, and where, in the nature of things, they practically all *must* occur. But Mr van Draat seems to push his healthy scepticism too far. The direct influence of the classical *cursus* he restricts almost wholly to the prayers and Collects, and perhaps to a few scholars steeped in Latin. And he winds up by saying that 'it has left no mark on the English language.' But this leaves out of view the indirect influence, which must have been very great. Once the classical *cursus* was lodged in the

language of devotion, it must have greatly reinforced the *cursus* of native stock. In any case, the two influences become impossible to disentangle. And Mr van Draat very truly notes that the importation and domestication of derivatives directly or otherwise from the Latin, a process that went on all the time, itself encouraged the *cursus*. This follows from the rhythms inherent in such derivatives ('maritime nations,' 'terrible conflagration,' 'permanent property,' etc.)

So it is the intermixture and clash of the native with these learned cadences that give to our prose one of its distinctive and fundamental traits. What Mr Croll really shows is this: that the element of cadence, whatever its origin, pervades all later prose of the 'numerous' order, and all parts of the numerous sentence. And the corollary is this: cadence cuts, or usually cuts, the word; prose rhythm, as I have sought to define it, does not cut them at all, and so normally does not coincide with the cadence. This crossing of cadence and prose rhythm constitutes a beauty, when each effect is in itself agreeable; and here is the direction, I believe, in which future analysis can usefully work.

It would be wrong to leave Mr Croll without naming his 'rules of cadence' (pp. 45 sqq.) The chief one is this: 'there is an effect of decreasing length of period and strength of accent from the beginning of a cadence to the end.' It is not clear how far this canon will hold good. Decreasing length, yes, by hypothesis, in both the *planus* and the *velox* (and in both forms of both). But in the normal *tardus*, two dactyls, this is not the case. And the theory as to 'decreasing strength of accent' depends too much on that arbitrary thing, the softening of a full into a minor accent, to be very scientific. I suspect that, whatever be true of Latin, our English habit of ear is free and variable. Mr Croll's speculations, partly founded on Zielinski, concerning the physiological basis of cadence, are also of interest,—as indeed is his whole article.

The rhythmical beauty, then, of our prose depends largely

on the cadences, native and other. It also depends largely on our alertness to the single feet, consisting of groups of undivided words, or on the 'foot-scansion.' To come nearer still, does not it depend on the perception of *both systems together*, and of the cross-purposes that are set up between them? Instead, therefore, of going further into the *cursus*, or seeking to distinguish further the habits of English writers, I turn to these cross-purposes, and to the light that may be thrown upon them by once more confronting the rhythm of prose with that of verse.

IV. PROSE AND VERSE

THE difference between verse and prose is usually said to be this, that in verse a certain system of feet recurs with regularity, while in prose there is or ought to be no such recurrence. That of course is the truth, but it is not the whole truth, and to rest in such a distinction blinds us to the niceties of the truth. First of all, the modulations of verse —its inversions, doublings, and omissions of accent, its substitution of trisyllabic or monosyllabic for disyllabic feet, or of disyllabic for trisyllabic—go far to make its beauty. This is well known. But to what are such substitutions due? Why, to the attraction of prose-rhythm. The German metrists state this as a 'conflict' between word-accent and metrical accent. But such an account does not give the reason of the thing. It is the joy of the irregular, unrecurrent speech that intrudes, and varies, and crosses, aud heightens the joy of metrical uniformity. This is true of all verse, but is most clearly seen in dramatic verse, and is there well recognized:

> Thy dé|mon, thát's | thy spír|*it which kéeps* | *thee, is*
> *Nóble*|, courá|geous, hígh|, unmátch|*able*|,
> Where Caé|sar's ís | *not*; *but*|, *néar hím*|, *thy ángel*
> Becómes | a féar|, as bé|ing o'èrpów|er'd; thérefore
> Make spáce | enoúgh | betweén | you.

These anapaests, pyrrhics, spondees, trochees and amphi-

brachs (a foot I incline to admit into verse, unlike Professor Saintsbury) are clearly due to the drag of the prose movement, which happily throws out the iambic run of the verse. But the influence of prose, that is, of natural utterance uncurbed, does not end there.

Clearly, if we choose, we can cut up the lines, not into the metre, but into the *prose* groups or feet, as here defined; that is, always beginning with the beginning and ending with the end of a word. Sometimes, but rarely, the two things coincide, and then it is for a special effect:

The woóds | decáy|, the woóds | decáy | and fáll|.

But in the lines quoted from Shakespeare we hear, not only the metre with its variations due to prose, but the following scheme also, which is the prose division:

Thy démon|, thát's | thy spírit | which keéps thee|, is
Nóble|, courágeous|, hígh|, unmátchable|,
Where Caésar's | ís not|; but, neár hím|, thy ángel|
Becómes |a fear|, as béing | o'èrpówer'd|; thérefore|
Make spáce| enoúgh| betweén you|.

Of course we hear this scheme; and the ear of the natural man hears it before he hears the metre, because speech comes before metre, and we hear speech as it actually is before we think of it as built into metre. It takes some training to hear metre. When we once have that training, we confusedly hear the two schemes together, and then the metre has such a hold on us that it takes some training to hear the prose movement also. Technically, of course, this is only to say that metre cuts across the words; but aesthetically it is to say much more than that. If we also reflect that the modulations of the metre itself are due to the other, the prose movement, partially but by no means wholly (which would be fatal) overpowering the metre, the complexity of the case becomes clearer.

Now turn the argument round and take prose, confessed and numerous prose, as the theme. Professor Saintsbury

lays down the ground-principle of Variety. Dr Clark points out that this historian does admit certain beauties of law and order, 'gradation' and the like, and asks what further law we can find; and he himself finds it in the *cursus*. Aristotle said long since that there must be 'rhythm' in prose, but only 'up to a point.' What point? That is the problem, which is not precisely soluble, because to define the 'point' would be to destroy the freedom of prose. It is, in the last resort, whatever Aristotle's 'sagacious person' may decide. But we may define the conditions of the problem, if only 'up to a point,' for our own tongue.

First of all, as to the actual trespassing of metre upon prose. This is always duly scouted, and 'Ossian' and Charles Dickens are pilloried for our instruction. But it is well that the superstitious fear of metrical effects in prose has been qualified (Saintsbury, *History*, p. 397, &c.); the many fragments of definite metre in the prose of Ruskin are their own justification. In the extract from Henry James, who would lose the anapaestic or amphibrachic movement in 'were gáthered, and caúse them to wánder unseén, unfóllowed', or the run of Gibbon's paeons? Some of these measures happen to coincide with the prose feet, and involve no word-cutting; but, of course, if the words are once cut, the metre is often heard plainly across the prose:

> the truth through flames, through torments, and through armies
> Of fierce insulting faces.

This blank metre does not obtrude: for the prose rhythm strikes across it too much to allow of such intrusion; but it is there, and both movements are there, and we hear verse through the prose just as we hear prose through Shakespeare's verse. Two distinct pleasures are interwoven but not confounded.

This too is the principle of the cadences, whether classical or native. That it is so, is a truth obscured by the simple fact

that the cadences, or most of them, are not metrical combinations. The classical *cursus*, in particular, take us away from metre, because they do not enter into any known, or at least into any familiar metre, ancient or modern. So far they sustain the genius of prose. But though they are not metrical, they have this in common with metre, that they are regular: the ear recognizes and expects them, in proportion to the fineness of its training. They represent the beauty of recurrence, law and order, just as verse does. In good English prose they do not recur on any system. But when they come they are identified, just as the particular prose feet are identified. Only, as has been said already, the cadences are at cross-purposes with the prose feet. They are fixed sequences, analogous to those of metre though not metrical, crossing the prose feet and so producing a double rhythmical consciousness. For this reason, in scanning the single feet, it seems best never to cut up words, for that introduces a confusion with the other, the complementary principle of the cadence, which does cut up words. The foot-scansion (as I will call it without wishing to beg any question) says: 'as meméntos | of próstrate | sórrow' (Saintsbury's 'gradation.') The cadence says (classical, no. iii) '(as me-) méntos of | próstrate | sórrow.' We hear both movements: hence our pleasure. The scansion says: 'clámorously | for déath.' | The cadence (native) says 'clámorously for | déath.' The scansion says: 'of the Pháraohs | and Ptólemies'; the cadence, '(of the) Pháraohs and | Ptólemies.' Let us listen for both. Thus we must cherish the double consciousness to appreciate verse and prose.

If, then, we ask what are the elements of rhythm, that is, of law, order and recurrence, which are to be found in English prose amidst its infinite variety, they may be classified for the present into the following: First, those successions of feet, defined by the 'foot-scansion' and consisting of entire words, that may be grouped under such a principle as 'gradation.' Secondly, the bursts, shorter rather than longer,

of actual metre, that is of verse-feet, which are not necessarily made up of entire words. Thirdly, the cadences, coming at the end of groups, clauses or sentences, and of recurrent but not of metrical type; yet having in common with metre the fact, that they also may strike across the word-divisions. These cadences are partially classical in origin (*cursus*) or native; the former having been classified, the latter still awaiting full classification. All these elements of law and order must be present to the ear together.

The born writer of prose, like the born poet, may or may not be the better for consciously thinking of iambs, amphibrachs, paeons and cadences. We cannot become like him by taking thought about them. But we shall listen and understand the better if we do so. It is a gain to put names and numbers to something of which we already vaguely feel the beauty or the discord. Beauty is form, and number is a constituent of form, and 'all things are determined by number.'

V. POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE this paper came out in 1913 not much seems to have been written on the same lines except by Mr Croll and Mr van Draat. But I should name an article by Dr D. S. MacColl on *Rhythm in English Verse, Prose, and Speech*, published in the 1914 volume of the *Essays and Studies* of the English Association. Here the musical theory of the English prosody is well argued in one of its extreme forms, and is also extended to prose, so that it touches on some of the questions I have discussed. As I do not accept the musical theory, there is little ground in common; but the lines of an answer, so far as touches prose, may be indicated. Dr MacColl, quite consistently, objects that in the nature of things two different rhythms cannot co-exist, so that we ought not to speak of prose-rhythm, in verse, cutting across verse-rhythm; for the 'prose-rhythm,' to him, is simply the 'logical distribution of the syllables,' and not rhythm at all. My

difficulty here is that the prose grouping *pleases*; it gives a definite aesthetic effect, which no mere logical grouping could do. And since it cuts across metre, and is not metre, what then is it, and what is it to be called, if not rhythm? and why does it please? I suspect that no one has ever explained why. What is there attractive in sequences which are without law or which only involve law in the limited degree that is suggested above?

Dr MacColl in a daring way tries to turn the flank of the problem. He says, not indeed that prose is verse (though he tries to scan out my Coleridge passage, and also a sentence from a leading article, into rude metre); but rather, that both are varieties of rhythmical effect, with the same fundamental elements. We have, he says in effect, a continuous chain, with four main sections. This is very suggestive; and I give Dr MacColl's sections, slightly abridging, and append a translation of each of them, which it is easy to do, into my own parlance:

1. 'Characteristic prose; free resolution of bar, with no predominance of foot, or recurrence of feet at the end of lines. Variation in length of line.'—That is, prose, whether good or not, which has no hint of metre.

2. At the other extreme is 'characteristic verse,' in which 'resolution,' or the breaking up of syllables into fractional time-equivalents, is rare.—That is, metre of a regular kind with very few substitutions,—a term rejected by the musical metrist.

3. Nearest to this comes 'verse invaded by prose emphasis, with frequent solution of feet in early bars, and occasional in later.'—That is, more substitutions. Most good verse, especially blank verse, is of this kind, on the principles explained in Section III above.

4. Nearest to 1 comes 'numerous prose,' in which there is 'less free and frequent resolution, so that rhythm becomes more apparent. Tendency to recurrence of lines with the same

number of bars.'—That is, prose with a certain amount of more or less latent, but not destructive, metre, but otherwise of the kind described in my examples from Gibbon and elsewhere.

The same difficulties come back, however. There is, to begin with, a real *saltus* between Nos. 3 and 4, which can only be bridged over by admitting various hybrid forms, like the prose of 'Ossian.' The difference (whatever it be), which all recognise, between verse and prose, is suddenly effaced. But this is not the main trouble. Most of us hear, in prose, a large balance of *non-metre*; and this pleases; and, again, why? Dr MacColl's scale is of value, because it really expresses the fact that the ingredients of law and no-law exist all along it, and that each of them gives its own pleasure, and that we also get the pleasure caused by their co-existence and conflict, as suggested in my Section III; but that the element of law reaches a vanishing-point in some kinds (No. 2) of prose, and the element of no-law in some kinds (No. 1) of verse. At that last extreme, which makes for monotony, the pleasure itself may easily vanish too. But this difference of view, and Dr MacColl's power (which I envy) of hearing a regular beat in a leading article, suggests more radical considerations, namely on

V. THE RELATIVITY OF ENGLISH SCANSION

IN the *The Times Literary Supplement* at the beginning of 1919 there was a lively affray over the foundations of English metre. Dr MacColl again led the case for the musical theory, and in his parle 'smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.' In 1920 the Rev. M. A. Bayfield published his *Study of Shakespeare's Versification*, in which he expounds a variant of the same view, insisting particularly that what is usually called 'iambic verse' is really trochaic with anacrusis. In 1921 Mr T. S. Omond brought out a second and fuller edition of his invaluable *English Metrists* (first edition, 1903). He had meanwhile produced several other books, partly theoretical,

partly historical, in which he argued for an approximate time-basis in the English 'foot,' but did not go the length of the musicians in extending this calculus to syllables. Nevertheless, in ordinary speech, and in the usual instruction of students, the former practice seems to go on; that is, little is said about time at all; the classic terms, 'iamb' and the rest, are used (as in my paper) on the understanding that they prejudge nothing as to time, and only refer to stress. The Laureate's work, *Milton's Prosody* (final edition, 1921), and Professor Saintsbury's *History* (and his *Manual* also) *of English Prosody*, are much in use, as I think they ought to be.

Now no two of these scholars wholly agree as to the basis of English prosody. They seldom use the same terms in the same sense. Disputation brings them no closer; on the contrary. Yet it is probable that they one and all like the verse of *Lycidas*. What does that fact mean? Do they all like a different *thing*? And if the same thing, what is it? Apparently Chaos umpire sits.

My object here is not to add one more discordant voice but to raise a previous question. What is meant by saying that the principle of our prosody '*is* ' this or that? In such matters, *esse* is *audiri*. Verse has no prosodic existence save as it is heard in the bodily or mental ear. The eye is only a channel to the inner ear. Is there any objective common measure at all? The disputants contradict one another, but perhaps they forget that they all may be right, each for himself. Mr Bayfield honestly hears every blank verse line trochaically. I can only hear it so by an act of painful violence, and for a moment. Mr MacColl hears, no less honestly, in terms of even fractions, and expresses by musical symbols (which allow, I know, much elasticity), the time-relations between syllables. The thing can be done, by some people. But it need not be done; and the pleasure is got by other people without doing it. The musicians say that the poet cannot 'substitute' a 'trochee' for an 'iamb.' But poets, and

poets too with musical knowledge, can be produced to tell you that they just *do* what the musician denies that they do. It is idle for the enraged musician to retort that the poet is 'really' doing something else. Are we, then, left with anarchy, and with the hopeless registration of different and personal impressions? Is there a criterion, or are we left stranded on the *relativity of scansion?*

It may seem at first sight that we are, and that the preliminary job, if there is to be any hope, must be simply the descriptive classification of different utterers, and of different listeners. The utterance, of course, must be *good*: something that we can fancy a good poet enduring as a listener, and something that an audience of persons of admitted taste would own, irrespective of their theories, to be good. Aristotle's 'man of judgment' is the only and the last resort; but we had better summon him in force. He would, I think, find first of all that the same poem could be uttered in various ways, all of which would please, but which might be justified on differing and incompatible theories. One speaker might chant the poem in a way congruous with the musical system. Another might *read* it, keeping some sort of approximate isochrony in the feet, but going no further. Another might *act* it, so that the variations of time, even in respect of the length of feet, would be highly irregular, and the efforts of the musical theorist to record them by stretching his symbols would be lost in preposterous unreality. And all these methods might give a pleasure to the judicious which they would be too candid to deny. Well, these varieties of utterance might in some degree be recorded on zoological lines. Could we get further? Would anyone who proceeded to theorize, simply be formulating his own sensations? We should then be reduced to adorning the temple of the Muse with a collection of human ears arranged according to shapes and sizes.

The case, I think, is not so desperate. We are not left with anarchy. For there is a hard ground of admitted fact. It is

not only a sensation, but also a real circumstance, that in an English line there is a normal number of total syllables, and of stresses, and of syllables intervening between the stressed ones; and that each of these norms not only allows but calls out for a number of variations; and that pleasure is given by hearing both the norm and the variations together. All parties, further, agree in breaking up the line into groups of some kind, determined by the position of the stresses; though there is disagreement as to the mode of such grouping. After this point the differences begin, and *esse* is, indeed, only *audiri*. But the practical, and in other words the artistic, question is whether the minimum on which all must agree is not enough for the purposer of history, of classification, and of teaching; enough, too, for us all to exchange intelligible words of like or dislike. I believe that it is enough. Stress, syllables, the norm and its varieties—these do not depend on private judgement, and they will serve. The chief difficulty is not in the facts; it is to find a terminology which is neither pedantic and full of neologism, nor yet hampered by false associations. Meantime, I hardly understand the passions that are awakened by this topic. It seems to me a cool and pleasant one, considering that we all really like the same poems.

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